Newsletter : Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University No.66

CSEAS

NEWSLETTER

Center for Southeast Asian Studies
Kyoto University

No.66 | Autumn 2012

Front Cover: A Queen termite of the family *Macrotermes carbonarius*, a fungus-growing termite species that is widespread in South-east Asia, is being extensively groomed by workers. The swollen abdomen cripples the queen's movement so she largely depends on workers for food as well as maintaining her hygiene.

Photo Credit: Kok-Boon Neoh

Contents

Editorial

Equatorial Southeast Asia has been undergoing immense change over the past 20 years. With the economic rise of nations in the region, its resources have come to be seen in market terms and this has led to unprecedented resource extraction. The area is remarkably rich in biodiversity and plays an important role in atmospheric and oceanic circulation. Yet, human interventions into large parts of Borneo, Sumatra, and parts of Malaysia have exacted a toll on the environment. These interventions appear to be one-sided as rapid socio-economic transformations impact upon multiple ecologies. The conversion of large swaths of forest into oil palm plantations has, at the level of the region, affected the atmosphere, the circulation of water, soil, plants, and animals. Once untouched areas become natural resources they are seen in terms of market revenue to be rapidly extracted. The changes these kinds of extraction have entailed have led to vast landscape and infrastructure transformations with subsequent biodiversity loss.

There is a crucial need to appraise how non-human species, - the biotic living factors of other species - also play a role in ecosystem maintenance and even within their own communities in high biomass societies such as equatorial Southeast Asia. In this issue we present a number of articles by scholars who conduct ecosystem research in Southeast Asia. Kok-Boon Neoh, an entomologist, shows us how termites, within their own communities, play a valuable role in supporting human societies. Kok-Boon, whose research interests' lie in looking at how termite and ant communities change along with agricultural intensification practices and urbanization, shows us how they care for the injured and deal with dead colony members.

Fujita Motoko, an ecologist, presents an intriguing and detailed look at human-nature interactions by showing how birds and the harvesting of their nests in Borneo have played an integral part in the cultural practices of the Iban and Kayan people in the region. Although there has been continuing biodiversity and ecological decline which has led to the near extinction of some bird species due to overexploitation, Fujita shows how some new bird farming techniques led to a recuperation of some bird stocks.

What these articles highlight is the urgent need to pay more attention to human-nature interactions. The consequences of human intervention to supply resources to markets in order to develop regions for short-term growth objectives can literally write away the intricate processes of insect and bird communities that form integral parts of ecosystems. Taking a more detailed approach toward human societies finding ways to co-exist with other species in high-biomass equatorial South-east Asia will require new avenues of inquiry that incorporate multi-disciplinary tactics as above.

The Editors

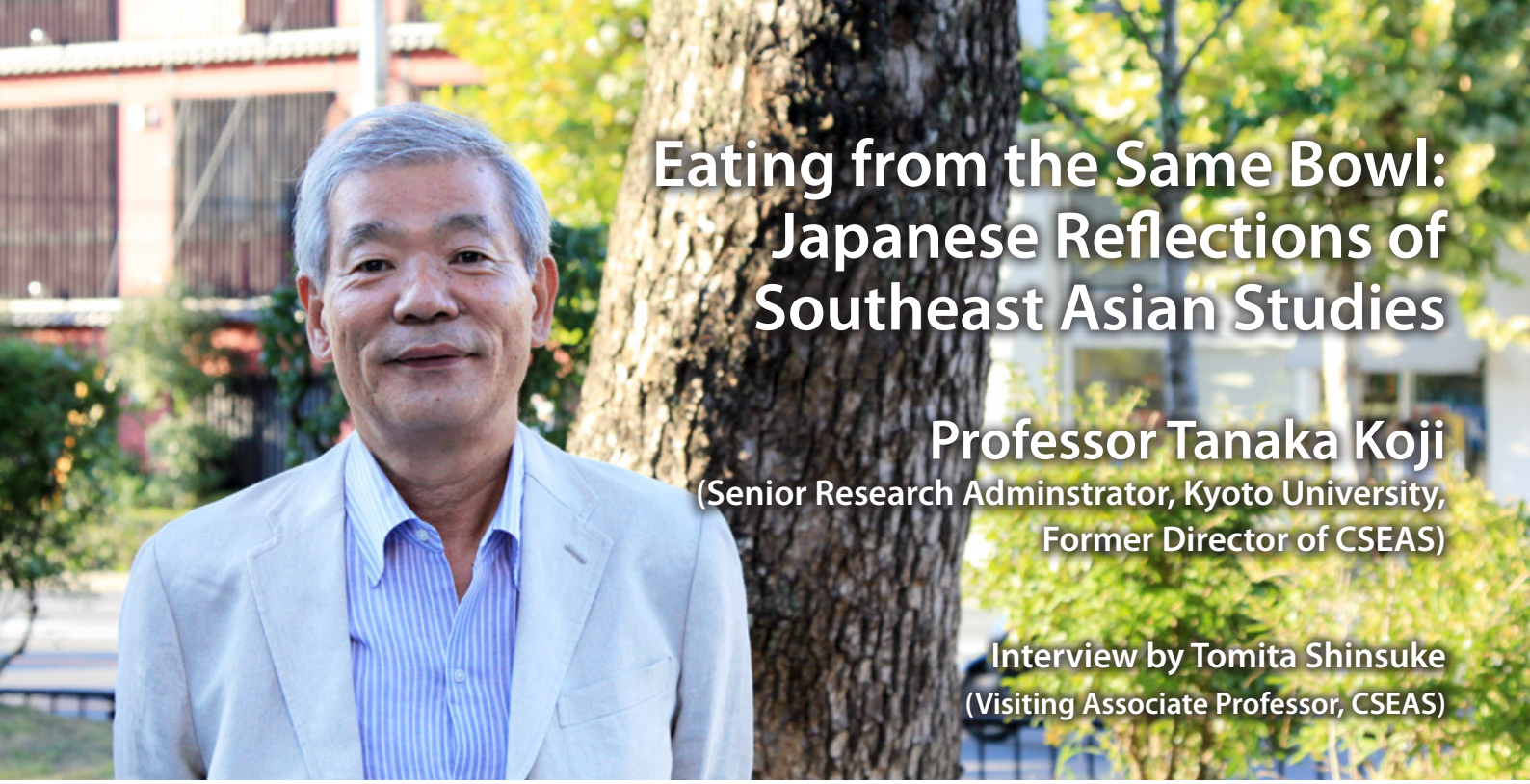
In the News

CSEAS has had a busy half year since the last newsletter. On May 7, 2012, a delegation of representatives from the house of representatives, Myanmar, visited the Center for Southeast Asian Studies. Seven representatives, including the Chairman of the Upper House, H. E. U Khin Aung Myint, the deputy Chairman, and five others exchanged opinions and pleasantries to foster understanding between Myanmar and Japan.

On July 9, 2012, an eleven-person delegation headed by H.E. Vice Minister Nghiem Vu Khai of Vietnam's Ministry of Science and Technology and including Members of the National Assembly's Committee of Science, Technology and Environment, Drs. Le Hong Tinh, Tran Van Minh, and Thon Thi Ngoc Hanh, visited the CSEAS for a dialogue with CSEAS faculty as well as faculty from other units of Kyoto University to exchange views on promoting research collaboration and exchange between Vietnam and Japan through partnership among their academic institutions.

Delegation from Myanmar on a visit to the Center for Southeast Asian Studies

CSEAS has also ratified Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with the Ministry of Health, the Kingdom of Bhutan; The School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Nanyang Technological University, Republic of Singapore; The School of Asia-Pacific Studies and the School of Government, Sun Yat-Sen University, People's Republic of China; The Institute for Southeast Asian Studies, Jinan University, People's Republic of China: Gorontalo State University, Republic of Indonesia; and The International Institute for Asian Studies, Leiden, Kingdom of the Netherlands.



Eating from the Same Bowl: Japanese Reflections of Southeast Asian Studies

Professor Tanaka Koji
(Senior Research Adminstrator, Kyoto University, Former Director of CSEAS)

Interview by Tomita Shinsuke
(Visiting Associate Professor, CSEAS)

At present, organizations and research projects that aspire to carry out multidisciplinary research are becoming de riguer. Nonetheless, in order to achieve meaningful research results, many areas remain to be dealt with. The Center for Southeast Asian Studies (CSEAS), Kyoto University, has promoted an area studies which includes the natural sciences and professor Tanaka Koji, a former director of the Center, played a decisive and commanding role in this. As one of the previous directors, he oversaw the transition of the Center from its previous incarnation to its current organizational form. As a leader of numerous research projects, he pioneered his own unique studies based upon agriculture. From the 1970s, Prof. Tanaka immersed himself in a multidisciplinary environment which extended beyond his own field where his results influenced other scholars around him. In this interview, visiting associate Prof. Tomita Shinsuke interviews Prof. Tanaka on his experiences that he had at CSEAS.

Cropping System Research: Learning from Agriculture

Tomita: Firstly, let me ask about your research background. When you first started out, you were an assistant professor at the Experimental Farm, Kyoto University, located in Takatsuki City, Osaka. What kind of research did you do at that time?

Tanaka: The farm was a place that offered student practice as well as farming management. It is a farm perfectly suited to letting people experience agricultural work. In particular, for researchers who have a background in crop science and agronomy, it is a very good facility to experience actual farming management. While I was at the farm, I didn't really do any experimental studies. When I was employed, I was only there for one year and three months, and I helped the technical staff with farm work.

Tomita: Was this mainly working in the field?

Tanaka: I didn't really do anything that amounted to research so I decided to mainly drive a tractor and help with various tasks.

Tomita: So you weren't involved in doing farming at that time?

Tanaka: That's correct. However, I did do some practical experiments on the direct-seeding cultivation of rice in large agricultural fields. We shipped out the rice that we harvested. I remember that it felt as if I were merely trying my hand at agricultural management.

Tomita: When you became an assistant professor at the Faculty of Agriculture, what did you do at the time?

Tanaka: I was working at the crop science laboratory. I also helped manage the Kyoto Farm, but I mainly did research on cropping systems and mixed cropping systems.

Tomita: Did these kinds of research bring cropping and mixed cropping systems research in Asia and Southeast Asia into your view?

Tanaka: I had waited for this prospect to arise. However, at that time, I still hadn't traveled overseas. While I was doing research at that time, I had my first chance to travel to Myanmar which was then known as Burma.

Tomita: Was that with professor Watabe Tadayo?[1]

Tanaka: Yes.

Tomita: You said you had waited for a chance to do research on agriculture in Asia and Southeast Asia. Was this an interest you fostered from your student days?

Tanaka: I conducted research on cropping systems in Japan. At the time I thought that it was extremely important to think about mixed-cropping and inter-cropping systems in land use. And from that, I developed my interest in Asia's different cropping systems. Furthermore, I also had an interest in the mutual interactions

among crops, how they could be improved, and how they stabilized productivity. It was at this time that I engaged in research that led me to want to know more about the ecological structure of mixed crop communities.

Tomita: When I was a university student, you related that you enjoyed reading Yanagita Kunio's[2] books when you returned home. Is that because you were interested in Japanese villages and the everyday going-ons of agriculture?

Tanaka: This is from the days when I was in my first few year's at university. At that time, the income gap between urban and rural areas was great. There were a great deal of problems concerning the democratization and modernization of rural villages, and their decaying agriculture. Students who entered the Faculty of Agriculture were conscious that they had to do something for villages and agriculture. I wasn't an exception. During my first two years as a student, I also read books from the humanities and the social sciences. Young students today might not have a great interest in socialism, but back in the 1960s, when we compared the then capitalist and socialist economies, the latter held a lot more appeal for me.

Tomita: You mean ideologically?

Tanaka: Yes. I had the impression that societies free from capitalists, - inspite of their planned economics -, were those which were more progressive in terms of their distribution of wealth. When we were students, we underwent a Socialist and Marxist baptism. This was what it was like when I was an undergraduate. I graduated in 1969, at the height of student movement across the nation. We were faced with not only agricultural issues, but also those related to environmental pollution. Many students had a great interest in social issues back then.

Tomita: This was a period when people were aware of these issues right? Now, it is very difficult to know who is 'friend' from 'foe'…

Tanaka: It was only after the student movement that science and technology started to be treated with suspicion.

Tomita: So upon your "baptism" you started to think more in regards to agriculture?

Tanaka: I think one issue that caught my attention was who is science for? Even within the discipline of agriculture, there were questions and discussions about who it is for and what agricultural technology should be. When I started out doing research, I wanted to be closer to the field so I decided to work on cropping systems.

First Encounters with Southeast Asia

Tomita: You haven't lost your raison-de-être in the importance of studying Southeast Asia?

Tanaka No. After that, I continued traveling around Asia. Like Japan, Southeast Asia possesses an amazingly rich basis for agricultural production both in terms of nature and society. I still hold the position that their is a need to continue with agriculture that doesn't waste any land, has not changed.

Tomita: Did you think that you wanted to do something in regards to the lag in the modernization of farming in Southeast Asia at that time? Was this the impetus for you to join CSEAS?

Tanaka: No, rather I generally thought that Southeast Asia was a fascinating region. I first traveled to Myanmar. At this time, Thailand was by then a developing nation, and there was a great disparity between both countries. There wasn't even a highway from the airport, but Bangkok became a bustling city with tourists from Japan and the special procurements from the Vietnam war. Whereas Bangkok was a city lit up by neon signs, the airport at Rangoon was, in comparison, a gloomy place. Even if you got a taxi to go into the city, everything was poorly-lit. My first impression was "wow what a place." However, in Myanmar I traveled to many different agricultural areas and saw very interesting forms of agricultural practice. From the perspective of cropping systems, doing research in different parts of Southeast Asia strengthened my interest in the region.

Tomita: Did your relationship to Myanmar have anything to do with Watabe Tadayo's book "the Road of Rice"(*Ine no Michi*)?

Tanaka: Yes it did. We split bricks from the historical remains of a ruin site and analyzed rice husks inside of them.

Tomita: This was a time when traveling overseas meant that you got a send off from a lot of relatives and friends at the airport. Did this time still apply when you traveled to Myanmar?

Tanaka: Yes it did. Everyone in the laboratories would give you a send-off party. I even received gifts from professors in adjoining laboratories. It wasn't so easy to travel overseas at that time, especially for young persons and students.

Tomita: So even for Kyoto University, which has a tradition of fieldwork, it was still a rarity to carry out overseas research?

Tanaka: It was still a limited affair. Grant-in-aid research funds and financing for travel overseas were only instigated at the end of the 1950s, and those who were chosen were few. We were lucky to receive funds from a special category and get permission to travel to Myanmar and do research.

Tomita There are many agricultural researchers who went overseas to work in the fields of agricultural technology development or area development. Was this the case then?

Tanaka: During the Second World War, Japan inflicted a lot of damage on surrounding countries. Thus, Japan participated in the Colombo Plan for Cooperative Economic and Social Development in Asia and Pacific put together by the Western nations as a post war recovery program, and carried out overseas technological assistance. Yet, the Socialist nations also provided aid and technological development to the region. During the Cold War period,

the area that Japan could most readily cooperate in was the introduction of agricultural technology, especially rice technology to Southeast Asia. Under the auspices of the Colombo plan, the Ministry of Agriculture and universities were able to send researchers overseas. At that time, as part of a war reparations program, the Japanese Ministry of Education initiated a program to accept overseas students to Japan. Kyoto University accepted its fair share of students from Southeast Asia. More than a few came to the Faculty of Agriculture, and this was the beginning of relations between the Faculty of Agriculture and Southeast Asian universities. Many of the foreign students returned to their countries as teachers and it was through them that we were able to do overseas and joint research projects. Kasetsart University in Thailand and Bogor Agricultural University in Indonesia were places where we fostered relations.

Tomita: And this formula hasn't changed to date right?

Tanaka: We now have 2nd and 3rd generation researchers going overseas.

Multidisciplinary Research in CSEAS: Eating from the Same Bowl

Tomita: When you transferred to CSEAS in 1979, you first did research in a frontier village in South Sulawesi. How did you come about doing research there?

Tanaka: Before Prof. Watabe was invited to be the director of CSEAS, I was an assistant professor at his laboratory. I followed him to the Center a year later in 1979. At this time I was still involved in the project in Myanmar and traveled there and in India with Prof. Watabe in the same year. After that, between 1979-80, there was talk about the need to carry out a large collaborative research project.

Tomita: And this was aiming at a joint multidisciplinary project?

Tanaka: That's right. One part of this was the Don Daeng Research Project[3] which Profs. Ishii Yoneo[4], Fukui Hayao[5] and Kaida Yoshihiro[6] pushed forward. They aimed to use Prof. Mizuno Koichi's[7] research in Don Daeng as a base to look at 20 years later. This is where the project to do intensive research in the village began in the Northeast of Thailand. Profs. Kuchiba Masuo[8] and Funahashi Kazuo,[9] from Ryukoku University, also participated in the project. At the time, they managed to start one project on the mainland, and subsequently started another one in an insular area. Tachimoto Narifumi[10] did research in Sulawesi, while Tsubouchi Yoshihiro[11] did research in South Sumatra. Profs. Takaya Yoshikazu[12] and Furukawa Hisao[13] also formed teams to do research in Sulawesi. Both myself and Kato Tsuyoshi[14] formed part of that team. This was my first time to travel to Sulawesi. Those who were in the mainland team were Kono Yasuyuki,[15] Hayashi Yukio,[16] and Miyagawa Shuichi.[17]

Tomita: What kind of awareness of issues led to a desire to carry out comprehensive research in a multidisciplinary fashion?

Tanaka: The multidisciplinary approach has been the Center's driving force since its inception. To understand areas, this kind of research approach is absolutely vital. Including the natural sciences in this approach is one of the characteristics of CSEAS. For example, research into rice cultivation in the Malay peninsula, the Chao Phraya delta in Thailand, and comparative research into other deltas, have all included a multidisciplinary approach. Kyuma Kazutake,[18] Takaya, Fukui, and Kaida all carried out comprehensive research into rice cultivation which ultimately produced a model. The Chao Phraya delta research was an example of this approach. Takaya would look at geographical features while Kaida would examine the hydrological environment. Fukui would be responsible for examining rice cultivation technology, while Furukawa would look at soil, Tsubouchi, society and Ishii Yoneo, religion. We took this comprehensive research approach towards the issues we examined.

Tomita: I've heard that for social scientists who participate in area studies, there is always a place for them to return to, but that this is not the case with natural scientists. When you came to CSEAS, were you resolute that you'd never go back to a Faculty of Agriculture? In other words, did you not hesitate?

Tanaka: I had the strong feeling that it would be a lot more interesting to wander around Southeast Asia rather than do crop science research in an Agricultural Faculty. And, I also thought that it would be difficult to return to the disciplines of agronomy and crop science after having done such fieldwork. I also had a constant doubt: did those researchers, who were doing experimental work, really know agricultural places? I took pride in going out into the world on my own terms, enter into a dialogue with them, and search for a path in order to understand agriculture.

Tomita: So at the time, did agricultural faculties focus more on experiments than actual fieldwork?

Tanaka: That's correct. In these faculties experiments have been the mainstream. The focus of present research is at a micro level.

Tomita: The natural sciences are often lumped together but in fact, the disciplines within the field are quite different. Is this to the extent whereby you cannot have a dialogue? How did you bring together people whose terminology and backgrounds are different, especially when you include the humanities and social sciences?

Tanaka: It's not a case of bringing them together rather "stealing" from each other. I came to realize that when people come together to do research, they don't just try to understand it from within the boundaries of their own disciplines. They have motivation to look at a region through a variety of perspectives. In the field, you experience a variety of things: through different disciplines, what do people observe, what kind of data do they search for, how do they prepare it, and what kind of words do they use to explain it? This in itself is study. In that sense, you "steal concepts" and "tools" from those around you…

Tomita: Did your resolve to create a new field after meeting all

those around you?

Tanaka: Not something as audacious as that, but to enjoy Southeast Asian studies with other people. In other words, to be together with like minded people.

Tomita: When I was a graduate student, there were intense discussions at CSEAS about multidisciplinary research. My impression from that time, was that this kind of research would continue to develop. However, looking over the present state of the field, it seems that disciplines have become more compartmentalized rather than more collaborative. Why do you think that the multidisciplinary environment you tried to foster — the methods and experiences of doing joint research between disciplines — has not been inherited?

Tanaka: The approach of the research groups working in Don Daeng and Sulawesi were totally different. With the group in Sulawesi, the researchers didn't focus on one particular location or community but looked far and wide. By doing so, you can paint a fuller picture of the area. That was the conceptual framework that we thought up. It was there that we came up with the terms 'maritime world' and 'frontier world.' If we had any kind of responsibility, it was to pass on this approach and research methods to create a larger picture for the next generation, something we didn't do. What we did was enjoyable, yet we didn't create researchers who could inherit this. This is something we must really think over.

Tomita: However, you managed to further develop the organization of area studies. And, you were able to create a category in the Japanese grant-in-aid research funds for other researchers to do area studies.

Tanaka: The reason why we were able to disseminate the term area studies, was that Southeast Asian studies had played a pioneering role. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) had organized Scientific Research on Priority Areas and in 1993 the Center for Southeast Asian Studies was central in putting forward Global Area Studies. Between 1993 to 1996 we initiated a large-scale project "Toward an Integrated Approach to Area Studies: In Search of a Paradigm for a Harmonized Relationship between the World and Its Areas." However, this project wasn't just made up of Southeast Asian Studies, but also South Asian Studies, European Studies, and other researchers working in other world regions. Through the framework of Area Studies we were able to launch many different research themes and move forward with projects. At that time, this led to very interesting programs. And, it was at this time that Kyoto University Press released its Kyoto Area Studies Series. From that time, if a political scientist was doing research on politics in a particular region, he could publish as an area studies researcher. An atmosphere arose where no one would complain if they were such a type of researcher.

Within the fields of the social sciences and humanities we have gathered together quite a few researchers who are looking into world cultures, religions, societies, politics, and economies. These researchers have been active in forming connections not just in disciplines and academic societies, but also in regions. This has even led to the organization of societies which take the name of their study regions. For example, until now we have been known for research in Southeast Asia, but there has been a move for us to be called Southeast Asian Studies.

To date, researchers focusing on areas have discussed them within their own disciplines. Through creating area studies, we expected that new scholarship and discoveries would emerge. Thus, we shone a light on area studies, through a meta level understanding of them, and through new fusions we expected to push forward this understanding.

Tomita: However, the actual situation is that within Southeast Asian Studies we have Lao, Thai, and Vietnamese Studies all separated by country. I think that the integratedness that area studies was aiming for, is not there. Furthermore, I feel that students in area studies programs from different disciplines don't really communicate with each other.

Tanaka: One reason for that is that students are in a very competitive environment, and are under pressure to produce research results. If you set agendas where graduate students have to make the most of previous studies within their discipline, clarify hitherto unclarified areas of research, and carry out analysis, this inevitably leads to the compartmentalization of research agendas. Students have to receive their diplomas and graduate. Area studies had to bear the responsibility of educating. This means that you cannot form groups and meander out into the field. We can no longer go out for months at a time, and do fieldwork as we did in the past. We were able to go and do research between July and October as we didn't have students and for this reason, we were even excused from faculty meetings. We never felt that we were under time constraints.

Tomita: Traveling out into the field together is crucial in pushing forward interdisciplinary research.

Tanaka: That's right. "Eating from the same bowl" is the most important thing.

Tomita: Will an organization that does area studies, such as CSEAS, be playing a more pivotal role as a hub to bring together researchers?

Tanaka: The most important role is to be able to deliver an environment where collaborative research can take place. Collaborative research, by area studies specialists who are trained in their disciplines, is important. For that reason, researchers need more time…

Integrated Agronomy as a Base for Area Studies

Tomita: Previously, I think you mentioned that agronomy was more interesting than area studies. In what sense did you mean that?

Tanaka: What I said about agronomy might be misleading. What I meant was that its integratedness has a certain appeal. Agriculture is important for you can study it wherever you go. In that sense, I find the sense of agronomy very interesting. I may sometimes say that an integrated way of thinking in agronomy is a base for area

studies. In this sense, to do area studies you do need some kind of disciplinary base. In my case, it was agronomy. Furthermore, I have practiced areas studies and Southeast Asian studies. This is the same as someone who has trained in sociology doing area studies. However, I've maintained the sense that I am not doing area studies for the sake of agronomy. I've practiced area studies.

Tomita: Finally, what plans do you have for future research.

Tanaka: I want to look into a Japanese agricultural history that includes an overseas perspective. That is, the relation between Japanese agricultural techniques and East Asia and Southeast Asia's agriculture. As I mentioned earlier about the Colombo Plan, there were linkages after WWII and even pre-war in then Manchuria, the Korean peninsula, Taiwan, and Southeast Asia. I will look at Japan's agricultural history from the early modern period to present day and its relations overseas.

Tomita: Looking at present day Japan's agriculture through a historical lens, we presently see that farmers are rapidly decreasing and that mountain areas are typified by the elderly. We are facing a difficult problem as to how we can resuscitate the agricultural industry.

Tanaka: On this issue, I am optimistic. It's often said that the introduction of the Trans-Pacific Strategic Partnership Agreement (TPP) will lead to the destruction of Japanese agriculture, but I do not think this is the case. You might not see paddy fields within Kyoto city, but just step out to the surrounding areas close by, and you are greeted by many. Do you really think that by neglecting them they'll become barren? I'm not a proponent of TPP, but can you really imagine that with its entry, our agricultural industry will collapse, that our paddy fields will become overgrown by weeds?

Tomita: However, isn't it the case that the villages that have practiced forestry in mountainous areas have become quite desolate ? Landslides have also become an issue as well as empty houses, and there are many places where there are more wild animals than people. I just wonder who will migrate to these places…

Tanaka: …And these places might completely disappear. There are villages that have been deserted, but there are other places with lots of people still living in them. I don't believe that all these fields will become overgrown. There is a call for the liberalization of trade and this will lead to a swing in opinion. They'll be people who have to continue in the agricultural industry as well as new motivated actors and they'll inevitably introduce a new equilibrium. We might even see an increase in foreigners. There might be people in urban areas who lose the mean's to make their livelihood; people who might or might not want to make a fast buck. So, in that sense, I really don't think that Japan's agricultural future is so bleak.

Tomita: Thank you very much for your time.

References

Watabe Tadayo. 1977. *Ine no Michi* [Road of Rice]. Tokyo: NHK Shuppan.

Notes

[1] Watabe Tadayo. Emeritus professor, agronomist and former director of CSEAS who was based at the Center between 1979-86.

[2] Yanagita Kunio. Japanese scholar (1875-1962) known as the father of Japanese folklore studies.

[3] See Fukui Hayao. 1993. *Food and Population in a Northeast Thai Village*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

[4] Ishii Yoneo (1929-2010) was a historian and was at CSEAS between 1965-90. He was a former director of the Center.

[5] Fukui Hayao. Agricultural scientist and former professor at CSEAS who was based at the Center between 1967 to 2000.

[6] Kaida Yoshihiro. Hydrologist and former professor at CSEAS who was based at the Center between 1969 to 2003.

[7] Mizuno Koichi (1933-1981). Anthropologist and former professor who was based at the Center between 1970-79.

[8] Kuchiba Masuo. Anthropologist and emeritus professor at Ryukoku University.

[9] Funahashi Kazuo. Sociologist and former professor at Ryukoku University

[10] Tachimoto Narifumi. Former director of CSEAS who was based at the Center between 1969-2002.

[11] Tsubouchi Yoshihiro. Former director who was based at CSEAS between 1966-98.

[12] Takaya Yoshikazu. Topographer and former professor at CSEAS who was based at the Center between 1967-97.

[13] Furukawa Hisao. Pedologist and former professor at CSEAS who was based at the Center between 1978-97.

[14] Kato Tsuyoshi. Sociologist and former professor who was based at CSEAS and ASAFAS.

[15] Kono Yasuyuki. Agricultural scientist and presently professor at CSEAS.

[16] Hayashi Yukio. Anthropologist and presently director for the Center for Integrated Area Studies (CIAS), Kyoto University

[17] Miyagawa Shuichi. Agronomist and professor at Gifu University.

[18] Kyuma Kazutake. Pedologist and former professor who was based at CSEAS between 1967-77.

(Translation by Mario Lopez)

Inequality in Thailand and Japan

Pasuk Phongpaichit

Former Visiting Research Fellow CSEAS

Until recently most academics, politicians, and policy-makers in Thailand paid little attention to inequality, but the recent political conflict has changed that. In a brilliant touch of political satire, the Red Shirt demonstrators called themselves *phrai*, serfs, and their opponents *ammat*, lords. This vocabulary expressed a sense of deep resentment; one Red Shirt protestor explained, "What we mean by democracy is fairness. We want fairness in three ways: legal, political, and educational" (Sopranzetti 2001, 12).[1] It also signaled a decline in deference, and that made people take notice.

Economic inequality does not automatically lead to political conflict. Indeed reducing income inequality does not figure among the demands of the Red Shirt protesters. But economic inequality tends to underlie and reinforce other forms of inequality, such as differential access to politics, education, other public goods, and also cultural attitudes of hierarchy. The recent Thai protests have been about these issues.

For the last three years, I have been working with a dozen researchers on a project about inequality. The figures are striking.

Over one generation from the 1970s to 2000s, average real per capita income in Thailand tripled. But at the same time, the society became much more unequal. Chart 1 shows inequality in household income as measured by the Gini Index (a higher figure means greater inequality).[2] Look at the left-hand part of the chart, up to the dotted line at 1992. In Thailand, inequality worsened across the whole period of "development," and especially in the boom which began in the mid-1980s. By contrast, the trends of income distribution in neighboring countries of Southeast Asia were all going in the opposite direction. This is perplexing. These countries are rather similar in many ways, and were all pursuing similar economic strategies. Why was Thailand so different in this respect?

Eric Kuhonta has recently published a book comparing the trends of inequality in Thailand and Malaysia (Kuhonta 2011).[3] He argues that the difference can be explained through politics. In Malaysia, United Malays National Organization (UMNO) emerged as a strong party, and had a commitment to mitigate social tension after the ethnic riots of 1969. By contrast, Thai parties have been weak and elite-dominated.

I think Kuhonta's thesis is interesting, but the subject is more complex than can be captured in a single argument. Thailand achieved high economic growth by becoming a part of global manufacturing chains, but then concentrated on keeping wages low to remain competitive on the low rungs of these chains rather than developing better skills and capabilities to move up the ladder within them. Wages lagged behind the growth of productivity and of GDP.

In addition, multinational firms tended to use capital-intensive techniques which generated little employment, so two-thirds of the workforce was left in agriculture or the informal sector where productivity and incomes were low. The provision of education was limited so the few who benefited were able to command rising incomes. Although some workers improved their income by moving from agriculture to manufacturing, the numbers were not large enough to offset the concentration of income in the pockets of capital owners and a new middle class with high education.

Bangkok became a super-primate city, a unique concentration of wealth and power, closely integrated into the globalized world economy. The gap in income and opportunity between Bangkok and everywhere else grew wider and wider. Government's spending on public goods such as infrastructure, education, and social security was very low and very concentrated in Bangkok. Hence these goods were rather scarce and a few had much better access to them than the many. This was another source of inequality.

Governments have never had serious policies to counter inequality. The tax system probably contributes to inequality because it relies heavily on indirect taxes (like VAT) which weigh more on the poor than the rich, and because direct taxes (on personal income and business profits) are widely evaded by the powerful. Several efforts at land reform have failed.

Economic crises may have contributed too. In the 1997–98 financial crises, many businesses were technically bankrupt. A few who still had access to cash were able to buy up corporate assets and land at fire-sale prices. There may have been a similar trend in other crises.

As the right-hand part of Chart 1 shows, Thailand's income inequality has improved a bit since the early 1990s. At least four factors have probably contributed. First, in the final stages of the pre-1997 boom, and again in the last few years, the labor market has been tight, allowing real wages to rise. Second, the Thaksin government's policies, especially the universal health scheme and microcredit provision, had a direct impact on lower-rung incomes. Third, governments have gradually increased farm-price subsidies. Fourth, government has begun to disperse industry outside the capital and devolve power and budget to local government bodies. This has begun to reduce the huge gap between the capital and the provincial areas. But the trend of reducing inequality is still tentative, and Thailand is still more unequal than its neighbors.

Inequality in wealth is even starker. Since 2006, there has been data on the household ownership of wealth (land and housing, gold, financial assets, major durables). Chart 2 shows the result of the first three surveys. Wealth is very, very concentrated at the top. The gap between the top 10 percent and the bottom 10 percent is almost 300 times. The gap between the top 10 percent and the second 10 percent is also very wide. And these data almost certainly underestimate the real picture because the rich are more likely to conceal their true wealth. The distribution of land and financial assets is especially skewed.

In international league tables of equality, Japan usually

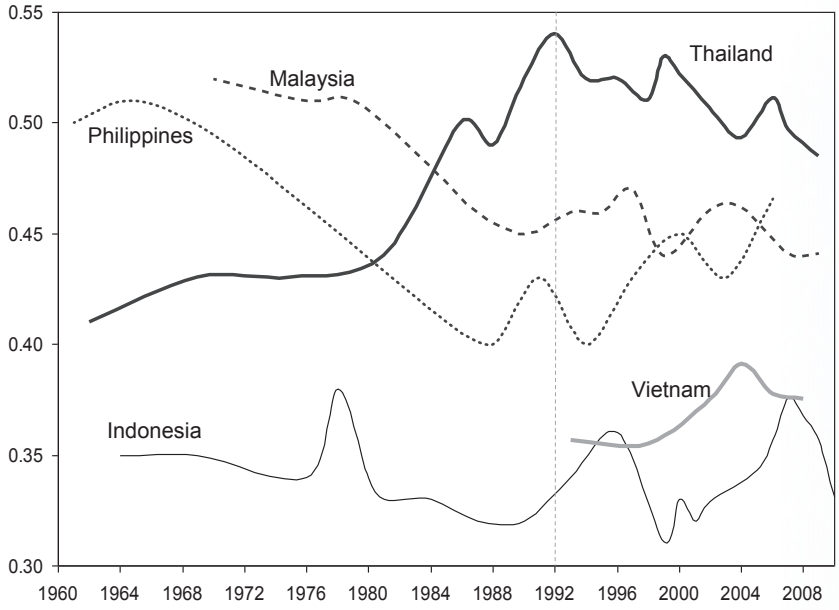


Chart 1: Gini index of Southeast Asian countries, 1960–2010

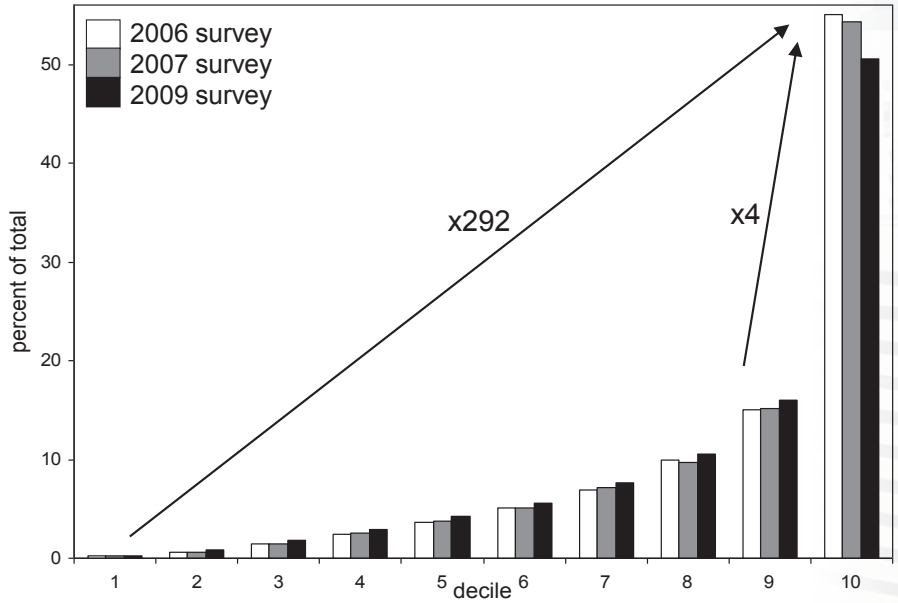


Chart 2: Thailand: household wealth by wealth decile, 2006, 2007, 2009

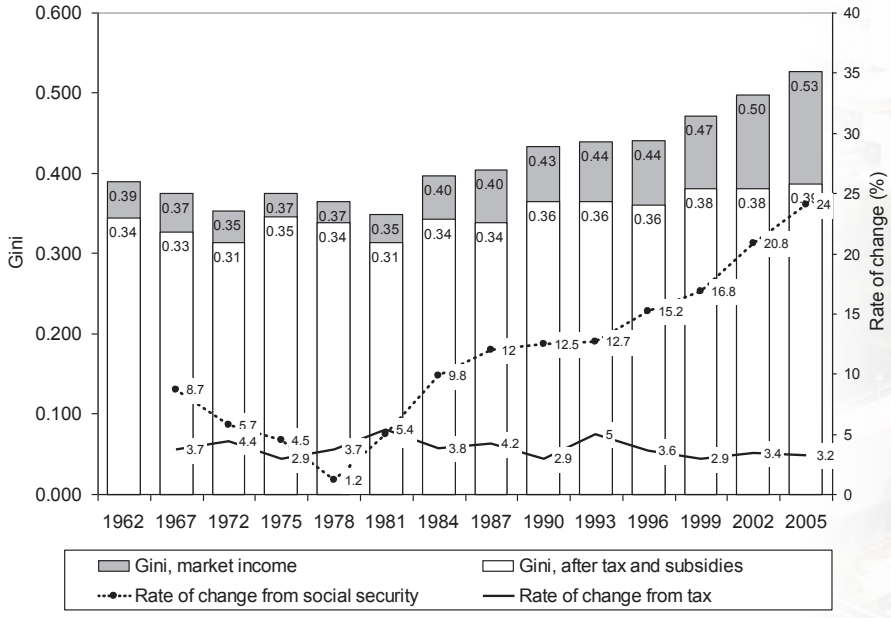


Chart 3: Japan: trends in Gini index, 1962–2005

Pathumwan, Bangkok

comes in the top ranks, along with Scandinavian countries, while Thailand languishes near the bottom, just above many African and Latin American countries. I was thus fascinated when I saw Chart 3.[4] The blue bars show "market income," which means income before tax and transfers such as social security payments. Since around 1980, inequality in market income has risen steeply. Indeed, in the last few years it has become even worse than Thailand.[5]

What caused this major change over two decades? Studies by Ohtake Fumio[6] and Randall Jones for OECD[7] identify two main causes, though differ a little on the weightage between them (Randall 2007). First, as the society ages, there are more people living on pensions and fewer in employment, so this alone causes inequality to rise. In addition, there is very high inequality within the cohort of retirees. Second, with the collapse of the lifetime employment system, the numbers in casual employment have soared, reaching an astonishing 34 percent of all the employed in 2010. Less than a third of them work part-time by choice. The young, aged, and women have especially high rates of involuntary casualization.

But there is another part of the Japan story. On Chart 3, the pink bars show inequality after tax and transfers. This has worsened a bit, but not by much. Japan still ranks among the most equal countries. This is an extraordinary achievement. How was it done?

The black line at the bottom shows the contribution from progressive taxation. This was important in the early years, but has declined due to reductions in the top tax rate since the mid-1980s. The red line shows the contribution from transfers, mainly pensions and other social security payments. These have grown rapidly and are the main factor keeping the distribution relatively equal by international standards.

So far, so good. But how long can this be sustained? The impact of ageing on inequality will continue to worsen. So too probably will the trend of casualization. The strain of these transfer payments on the (highly indebted) Japanese government is already high. The young are starting to question the system since they benefit little now, and may never benefit because the financing is unsustainable.

Still, what is truly striking from an international perspective is the success of the state in maintaining relatively low inequality to date, and the general support from society for this effort. Equality is a deep-seated value of Japanese society.

That is not true of Thailand. Like the US, it has a high proportion of one-time immigrants, and a frontier-style economy in the recent past. There is a strong ethos of the self-made man, and little support for the idea that people *ought to be* equal. My research team has to be careful about its recommendations for policies to mitigate Thailand's inequality. For example, if we suggest increasing direct transfers and making tax more progressive, we will probably face opposition. Instead we will recommend higher spending on public goods, which will be more acceptable. But we will also suggest introducing taxes on wealth to pay for the higher spending, and that might evoke some interesting reactions.

Many thanks to Professor Kaoru Sugihara for hosting my stay at CSEAS and helping me to understand the Japanese situation, and some aspects of Thailand.

Notes

[1] Claudio Sopranzetti, *Red Journeys: Inside the Thai Red-shirt Movement*. Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2012.

[2] This chart was originally created by Professor Hal Hill at the Australian National University.

[3] *The Institutional Imperative: The Politics of Equitable Development in Southeast Asia*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011.

[4] This came from a presentation on "Policy Frame for Poverty Alleviation" by Yasuhiro Fujii, deputy assistant minister for International Policy Planning, Minister's Secretariat, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (2010).

[5] There is no equivalent measurement of market income in Thailand, but as transfers are minimal, it would not differ much from the household income distribution.

[6] *Inequality in Japan* (2005) is in Japanese and I have read only the English outline on the occasion of the book receiving the Japan Academy Prize, and other summaries.

[7] Randall S. Jones, *Income Inequality, Poverty and Social Spending in Japan*, OECD Economics department Working Papers No. 556, 2007.

Myanmar's ASEAN Chairmanship in 2014: Legitimacy, Salvation and Interests

Pavin Chachavalpongpun
Associate Professor CSEAS

Myanmar has been granted the chairmanship of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) for 2014, eight years after it voluntarily gave up its turn to chair the group. Despite the latest political developments in Myanmar, critics continue to doubt if its reforms are real, or just cosmetic. Such doubts are also cast upon Myanmar's role as ASEAN chair. This essay seeks to engage two key arguments. First, Myanmar needs the ASEAN chairmanship to supplement its ongoing democratization, a part of the new regime searching for a fresh source of legitimacy by reaching out to neighbors in the Southeast Asian region. More importantly, it is hoping that the progressive reforms might ultimately influence the West to abolish decades-old sanctions which have severely hurt the financial status of Myanmar's top leaders. But one crucial question remains: will this be translated into the likelihood that Myanmar will behave according to regional norms in the future? Second, on ASEAN's part, awarding Myanmar the regional chairmanship is essentially strategic because it will vindicate ASEAN's past Myanmar policy which was centred predominantly on engagement and not punishment. Yet, how Myanmar will fulfil ASEAN's obligations toward community building remains an unanswered conundrum. It appears that the much anticipated Myanmar chairmanship is primarily designed to legitimise Myanmar rather than to promote a true sense of regionalism which now depends on the materialization of community building by the year 2015.

A Decade of Transformation

At the 19th ASEAN Summit in Indonesia's Bali, leaders of ASEAN announced that they had unanimously agreed to give Myanmar the chairmanship of the regional bloc for 2014. Myanmar was originally scheduled to chair the rotational chairmanship of ASEAN in 2016, but had requested to host the ASEAN Summit two years earlier after being pressured to relinquish its chairmanship for 2006. This was due to its repressive military regime continuing to damage the reputation of ASEAN. 2014 will be a crucial year for both Myanmar and ASEAN. For Myanmar, the second general election since 1990 will be just a year away (in 2015).[1] Serving as ASEAN chair will render much needed political legitimacy to the regime in Naypyidaw. The government will be responsible for organizing hundred of ASEAN meetings during the period of its chairmanship. This will further expose Myanmar to the regional community, bring in more investments from ASEAN countries and their dialogue partners, and at the same time allow the government to exercise its leadership by working closely with ASEAN members to reaffirm their obligations toward community building in 2015. Therefore, an ASEAN chairmanship could become a fundamental factor that can potentially shape Myanmar's internal politics in favour of the ruling elite and to a certain extent influence election results. As for ASEAN, offering Myanmar the chairmanship seems inevitable, although it is a risky gamble. Its decision could be explained in the context of ASEAN yearning to be vindicated of its past policy of engaging with Myanmar, rather than isolating it, which was often criticized by Western governments for being too soft, powerless and indeed tolerant of the repressive behavior of the Myanmar junta. Factually, Myanmar has to date remained the only member which has never served as a chair of ASEAN. In approving Myanmar's quest for chairmanship, ASEAN, once again, piggybacks and thus legitimizes the Myanmar regime, just as it did in 1997 when Myanmar was admitted into the family of ASEAN despite protests from the international community.


The New Light of Myanmar

President U Thein Sein leaves for Indonesia to attend 19th ASEAN Summit, related summits

True patriotism

The New Light of Myanmar reporting the attendance of the ASEAN Summit in Indonesia of President Thein Sein in November 2011

From 2004, Myanmar embarked on its roadmap toward democratization. Although at the beginning the reforms were slow, but in 2010, Myanmar showed the world that it had finally fulfilled all the steps toward their version of democratization when it sponsored a general election, which would be held for the first time in 20 years. At first, the election was heavily reproached as being bogus and a process designed to legitimise the political position of the old junta. However, from 2010 onwards, to everyone's surprise, Myanmar witnessed rapid political developments, from the release of opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, the return to the legal fold for her party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), and eventually, to her own political homecoming. Parallel to these positive developments has been the persistent campaign launched by the new government in Naypyidaw to bid for ASEAN's chairmanship in 2014. Such a campaign was widely considered as a recognized bid to accord the government a sense of legitimacy. For ASEAN, the progressive political reforms in Myanmar came to rescue the organization's failed Myanmar policy. Thus, granting chairmanship to Myanmar was justified. But even as ASEAN was feeling satisfaction with the rapid political progress in Myanmar, some Western nations remained sceptical about the ongoing reforms in this country. In particular, major non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were still not convinced if the reforms in Myanmar were real. They are of the impression that Myanmar has not met international standards on political conduct. So, the Myanmar chairmanship of ASEAN in 2014

is untimely, and will even obstruct the grouping's plan to complete its community building in 2015.

A variety of Responses

So far, the West has adopted an ambivalent attitude. Positively, a number of Western governments have already welcomed Myanmar's in-progress political reforms and its civilianization process. And indeed, political changes in Myanmar have generated an impact on the policies of some Western and Asian government toward the Myanmar regime. For example, the E.U. Foreign Ministers met on 23 April 2012 to review its Common Position on Myanmar and as a result lifted some sanctions, particularly the visa bans against Myanmar officials traveling to Europe. Similarly, the Obama administration has been reviewing the complicated layers of U.S. sanctions, looking for those that can be lifted by the executive branch in lieu of a major Congressional decision to lift legislative sanctions. In March 2012, the U.S. State Department lifted travel restrictions on Myanmar diplomats assigned to the United Nations, which had prohibited them from travelling more than 25 miles outside of New York. Shortly after that, the Congressional Research Service released a report that was fairly bullish in stating that the administration would lift some sanctions after the 1 April by-elections in Myanmar. In Asia, Japan has approached a watershed in its policy toward Myanmar. The Foreign and Trade Ministries planned to launch a major economic surge but were held back by the fact that Myanmar owes Japan US$6 billion from previous loans. They are currently considering working with the international financial institutions to arrange bridging loans and other mechanisms to get around this. Recently, the Japan Bank for International Cooperation sent a delegation to Myanmar to see if there would be any other potential financial schemes they could work closely together on. However, despite optimism, scepticism has remained. The continued human rights abuses in Myanmar, and the fact that a large number of political prisoners have not been released even when the political situation has improved, are responsible for the ambivalent attitude of some Western governments. Moreover, drug trafficking and refugees emanating from Myanmar still pose as an imminent threat to its neighbors. This attitude is the main reason why international sanctions have not been totally abolished.

Meanwhile, reaction from some ethnic groups has been largely disapproving. Representatives of ethnic groups argued that ASEAN granted its chairmanship to Myanmar too soon instead of delaying its decision until key changes were made.[2] In other words, ASEAN's move to celebrate Myanmar's political transition by granting its chairmanship was immature and could be counterproductive as the political elite could change their mind in the future if they feel that democratization would further shrink their political authority. Earlier, there was a call for the Myanmar government to meet three important benchmarks before an ASEAN chairmanship was to be granted to Myanmar: first, immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners; second, a declaration of a nationwide ceasefire with ethnic armed groups and cessation of attacks on ethnic communities; and third, inclusive political dialogue with ethnic nationality representatives, including armed groups, and the pro-democracy movement, led by Suu Kyi and the NLD.

Legitimacy for Naypyidaw

Playing host to an ASEAN Summit in such a crucial year is part of an attempt by the Myanmar regime to have its legitimacy recognized not only by its ASEAN neighbors but also by the international community. Legitimacy has become immensely fundamental

Downtown Yangon with the golden Shewdagon Pagoda as a backdrop

for the lifting of sanctions. And the quickest route to earn that legitimacy from the international community is to exploit ASEAN platform to recreate Myanmar's new persona as an emerging democratic state in the region which deserves to be supported, endorsed and legitimized. It is rather complicated to understand why the Myanmar junta finally agreed to step down to pave the way for a progressive faction to transform Myanmar into a more civilianized state. There are a number of reasons behind the unexpected political changes. First, prior to the election of 2010, pressure within the country had built up to such a degree that the *ancien régime* of Myanmar was forced to look for a way to open up the country if the political elite were to survive. At the same time, the regional and international environments have changed tremendously. Almost all ASEAN members have been concentrating more on accelerating their economic growth and building the region as a community. This has taken place alongside changes within Myanmar's domestic realm. The new generation in the army—*tatmadaw*—is less conservative. Besides, democratization has restrained the military's traditional role in defining domestic political order as well as conducting foreign relations. It was likely that there was an agreement among the elite on the need to transform Myanmar before it was too late and they were left totally powerless. Hence, the political reforms have begun. For the Myanmar leadership, opening up the country economically was an initial step which was constructive and essentially strategic. It allowed political leaders to cling on to political power while promoting liberal economic policy to justify its ongoing reform process.

The reform was a big gamble. To ensure that the political elite would not be losers in the new game of politics, they sought to have the new regime legitimized by the international community—the regime that was envisaged by the elite of the past generation. To expedite this legitimizing process, the Myanmar leadership embarked on several "brave" moves, such as releasing Suu Kyi, relaxing draconian controls over the media, legalizing trade union, and the invitation to the NLD to return to the political domain.[4] The ASEAN chairmanship was therefore needed so that Myanmar would be able to fulfil this important agenda of its own. In the meantime,

Myanmar has actively readjusted its diplomatic tactic. Not only has it targeted at being involved in the ASEAN community, but also reaching out to powers outside the region. From the visit to Myanmar of US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in December 2011, to those of UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and British Prime Minister David Cameron in April 2012, Myanmar sent out a strong message that it wanted to engage the world and behave "normally" so that it would be recognized as a responsible member of world society. The new diplomacy, from isolation to engagement, was meant to earn legitimacy on the part of the new government under President Thein Sein.

From this viewpoint, serving as ASEAN chair will further solidify Myanmar's current position both in the region and in the world. ASEAN has its own dialogue partners system and many cooperative frameworks that bring together all members to work closely on a variety of issues. The position as a chair of ASEAN will provide Myanmar an excellent opportunity to cooperate with non-ASEAN partners, with whom Myanmar has been yearning for rapprochement in exchange for gaining their support and recognition. In other words, an ASEAN chair will be complementary to Myanmar's national efforts to engage with foreign powers for ultimately a normalization of diplomatic relations. This legitimacy is, for the Myanmar regime, a prerequisite to the lifting of sanctions. And without sanctions, more direct contacts between the Myanmar economy and foreign investors will be made possible at a national level. As a result, the economic livelihood of Myanmar will improve, allowing the regime to earn even more legitimacy. Most importantly, a sanctions-free Myanmar would benefit old generals who may have left the political scene but are still in control of big businesses in Myanmar. This explains why they were willing to jeopardise their power position through the support for the country's democratization.

Salvation for ASEAN

The next question is why ASEAN went along with Myanmar's ambition to host the Summit two years before its rotational chairmanship. ASEAN has consistently been reproached for its flawed Myanmar policy, since the day it offered membership to the junta—a decision that was irreversible. Through the years, Myanmar has never behaved accordingly to the expectation of its ASEAN fellows. Instead, it continued to test the limits of ASEAN and often put the reputation of ASEAN at risk. In the meantime, certain norms practiced in ASEAN acted as a great barrier in influencing the Myanmar regime. On the one hand, ASEAN has rigidly practiced the principle of non-interference and thus was not in a position of lecturing the Myanmar junta. On the other hand, the decision by the organization to not offer Myanmar membership in 1997 was a mistake. Owing to this dark paradox, ASEAN was hand-cuffed by its own policy: as much as by its own rules and regulations. As a consequence, the only time ASEAN spoke in one voice was when it constructed a policy of constructive engagement in dealing with Myanmar issues. Briefly put, this policy preferred dialogue rather than sanctions. This was criticized by friends of ASEAN as ineffective as the policy unveiled the organization's weakness in managing Myanmar. Myanmar has thus long become a stigma for ASEAN. And because of this inherent weakness of ASEAN, its efforts to engage with Myanmar were actually taken for granted by the Myanmar leaders themselves. The need for ASEAN members to compete with other regional powers in order to gain a foothold in resource-rich Myanmar represented another reason why a soft approach was preferred by ASEAN as it handled Myanmar issues. With this stigma, ASEAN was waiting for the right moment in which it could justify its past policy, and eventually reaffirm that the ASEAN way, in which constructive engagement was adopted instead of pressure and sanctions, was the right approach from the beginning. And finally, that right moment arrived with the request of Myanmar to serve as the chair in 2014. The decision was made in 2011 during which Indonesia was the chair. Indonesian Foreign Minister Marty Natalegawa spoke on 19 September 2011 about whether to invite Myanmar to chair ASEAN in 2014 by saying, "I shall be keen to listen and to hear the voice of civil society, not least the voice of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. We welcome this invitation and take the opportunity we have been offered to present our views on whether Myanmar should chair ASEAN in 2014."[5] Indonesia's solid backing of Myanmar's request was part of Jakarta's implementing a new diplomatic activism of its own.


The famous Shwedagon Pagoda, Yangon

As stressed earlier, the only time ASEAN was successful in producing a united stance vis-à-vis Myanmar was when it formulated the constructive engagement policy. But for most of the time, it was evident that ASEAN was not in a place where it could find a common position to deal with several problems in Myanmar, from the repeated house arrests of Suu Kyi, the continued detention of political prisoners, to the crackdown of street protestors in the so-called "Saffron Revolution" in 2007. ASEAN's approach has been "responsive" and "reactive," rather than leading any initiatives—this starkly contradicted its ambition of being a driving force of the region. Now that Myanmar has flirted with democratization with tangible outcomes being seen since the election in 2010, ASEAN immediately saw the changes as part of its own success of "acclimatizing" Myanmar to fit in with developments in the region. ASEAN was quick to celebrate the ongoing political reforms in Myanmar. And when Suu Kyi was released one week after the election, several state-sponsored media organizations within ASEAN claimed that the endpoint of authoritarianism in Myanmar had arrived. From this perspective, rewarding Myanmar for its effort to democratize was legitimate. On top of this, ASEAN itself also demanded recognition from the international community for its endeavour to engage with Myanmar—this was a part of ASEAN claiming to be a serious

Images of Buddha, Shwegadon Pagoda, Yangon

Lake Yangon

organization which supported democracy and political dialogue. The vindication of ASEAN's past policy was indeed behind the offer of the ASEAN chairmanship for Myanmar. Singapore's *Straits Times* wrote, "ASEAN was right on the money when it called on the West to lift the sanctions on Myanmar," in response to the democratic progress in Myanmar in 2011.[6] Meanwhile, Surin Pitsuwan, ASEAN Secretary-General, lent his support to the Myanmar chairmanship when he declared, "Myanmar's chair in 2014 will be a critical landmark in the history of ASEAN."[7]

For Whose Interests?

As this essay argues, the real missions of both Myanmar and ASEAN behind the chairmanship issue were indeed more about a self-fulfilment rather that anything meaningful to the development of regionalism. The objectives of Myanmar were clear—to gain legitimacy as a prerequisite to the lifting of sanction. For ASEAN, the only goal was to seek vindication of its past Myanmar policy even when it may know that the Myanmar chairmanship may not contribute positively to community building in 2015. In an interview with a Singaporean diplomat, he said, "We must assure that ASEAN will not make the second mistake—the first was to admit Myanmar, now we have to make ASEAN chairmanship of Myanmar work."[8] Naypyidaw has not elaborated its vision of how to help enhance the effectiveness of ASEAN and further promote regionalization. Meanwhile, ASEAN has paid too much attention to, and possibly became too excited about, the unexpected changes in Myanmar that it rushed to grant its chairmanship to Myanmar without seriously calculating the impact of the community building process. Having Myanmar as a chair would challenge ASEAN's effort to recreate its image as a serious organization. There will be many questions which will remain unanswered. These could include: how will Myanmar handle its human rights situation and at the same time preside over the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR)? What if the chair continues to violate human rights and obstruct the works of the AICHR? When will Myanmar release all political prisoners? And is Myanmar ready to reconstruct its economy so that it could rejoin the world's economy? Difficult questions will also be asked in terms of how ASEAN will response to a possible failing chairmanship on the part of Myanmar. What are measures to be put in place in case Myanmar backtracks on its political reforms while serving as an ASEAN chair? Will ASEAN be brave to revoke Myanmar's chairmanship should political violence occur in Myanmar?

Notes

[1] The first general election since 1990 was held on 7 November 2010. The Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) declared victory, after at least two opposition parties conceded. The United Nations and Western countries however condemned the elections as fraudulent.

[2] ASEAN should delay Burma's Chairmanship to help ensure it moves towards democratic transition and peace, *Burma Partnership*, 17 October 2011, p. 1 http://www.burmapartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/BP-Briefer-ASEAN-Chairmanship-2014.pdf (accessed 2 June 2012).

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ba Kaung, Burma awarded 2014 ASEAN Chair, *The Irrawaddy*, 17 November 2011 http://www2.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=22480 (accessed 3 June 2012).

[5] ASEAN to Listen to Suu Kyi as Burma seeks Chair, *The Irrawaddy*, 20 September 2011.

[6] Time to lift Myanmar sanction, *Straits Times*, 14 October 2011.

[7] Myanmar to tap the *ASEAN Secretariat* to prepare for 2014 Chair, Business Group call for level playing field, and lifting of sanctions will help clear the road to better livelihood for the people, *ASEAN Secretariat*, 22 February 2012 http://www.aseansec.org/26799.htm (accessed 8 June 2012).

[8] Interview with an unnamed Singaporean diplomat, Singapore, 21 March 2012.

Termites' Merciless Acts of Respect toward their Sick and Dead Nestmates

Kok-Boon Neoh
Researcher CSEAS

Termites are excellent forest keepers. They clear fallen trees and other cellulose-base materials, and recycle them back to nature. In addition, there is increasing evidence that points to the substantial positive influence of termites on soil quality by enhancing soil nutrient composition and increasing soil porosity. This in turn, increases crop yields to meet increasing food demand. Today, their roles in supporting human civilization and governing ecosystem functions are undisputedly recognized by ecologists despite their notoreity as pests in human settings.

Termites are commonly seen as vulnerable and fragile insects. Due to a thin skin (poorly sclerotized cuticle), they look whitish in color and run a high risk of desiccation. Nonetheless, they are ubiquitous inhabitants of many rangeland ecosystems throughout the world, but absent from areas covered by ice. The establishment of the very first termite colonies has been dated back to about 250 million years, far beyond our human history on earth and they reside back in a period when dinosaurs were still present. Over time, and to a certain extent, termites must have developed their own adaptive survival strategies to strive through harsh environments and successfully sustain the colonies they have today.

Bugs like ants, bees, and wasps use many sophisticated behaviors when they encounter sick nestmates in their nest to prevent the spread of diseases that may be unfavorable to a colony. Dead body removal is one of the most common responses exhibited by ants and bees that inhabit large and enclosed nests. In the case of ant's, such behavior was first described in the 1950's, in which dead ants were picked up and carried away from the nest toward refuse piles by worker ants.

Termites can built their nest as conspicuous mounds to cryptic underground colonies or even within a single small piece of wood. Furthermore, a small proportion of termites are responsible for creating the maze of chopstick-width tubes in the mud during food searching, and most of them spend a great deal of their time in a confined nest for young and reproductive caring. Under controlled temperature and humidity, a diverse and potentially pathogenic microbial community may reside within the nest. This definitely poses a considerable disease threat to termite members. The question on how termites cope with sick termites has always fascinated biologists as well as the educated layman for decades and is the focus of this essay.

Decade-long mutual and adaptive termite battles

As a rule, termites have significantly developed an adaptation to social life in enclosed nests: some termite species can be as cruel as to cannibalize their own nestmates; sometimes however termites can be slightly more "respectful" of their dead.

Firstly, sick termites usually show a series of alarming responses, such as head banging on surfaces in an effort to produce vibrations after coming into contact with potentially

Termites that nest within their food consumed their dead nestmates. This creates more open spaces in their limited living/feeding area.

life-threatening pathogens (Rosengaus et al. 1998). This appears to convey information about the presence of pathogen-exposed termites to nearby nestmates to stay away from the source. Nevertheless, in most instances, escape is just a temporary measure and not the best solution for a highly social and population-concentrated species in a confined environment. Termites engage in complex behaviors to get rid of their sick and dead nestmates. Of course, the behavior shown is not consistent among termites but is actually species specific.

Recent research demonstrated that after evacuation, termites returned to their sick to check their fitness and groom them frequently in an effort to differentiate the degree of decay among the dead and the level of threat they pose to the colony (Neoh et al. 2012). For example, how many dead are there? Are any individuals still alive? Do they pose a threat to the colony? Through this kind of action, the sick termites benefitted through social contact (i.e., grooming) with healthy nestmates: their recovery rates were drastically increased as the grooming physically removed pathogens on their body and allowed saliva that believably contains antiseptic properties to be smeared on their bodies. Such caring behavioral acts are proven to be pivotal in the ability of termites to adapt to pathogens in confined environments.

In addition, healthy termites significantly improve their ability to resist infection after grooming sick termites. Seemingly, the healthy termites get 'vaccinated.' This is akin to what humans do when exposing themselves to a disease-causing agent or certain types of contaminants. The immunization is then transferred among healthy termites within the colony. This 'social transfer' of infection resistance could enhance the fitness of colony members (Traniello et al. 1998).

Some termites do not show any signs of mercy to injured termites or the newly dead. One study showed that injured termites and newly dead termites were highly groomed and dragged into tunneling tubes before being cannibalized (Neoh et al. 2012). Several reasons accounted for the cannibalism. First, termites are wood feeders that readily attack living trees and wooden structures that contain little protein. Thus, the limited protein in the termites' diet likely triggers necrophagy or cannibalism as an alternative protein source. Second, of course, such acts are also ways to abolish those which are handicapped and incompetent in working for the colony.

However, necrophagy or cannibalism has to be appropriately carried out, particularly when encountering old/highly rotten dead bodies that might contain comparatively high pathogen levels. Consuming highly rotten termite dead bodies could potentially spread pathogens among nestmates that would be detrimental to colony fitness. With such cases, termites are slightly more respectful of their dead, and they choose to bury the dead by entombing them where they are discovered. Such a phenomenon leads to fanciful conclusions that 'termites worship the dead'.

Over time, humans handle the sick and deceased in a respectful and sanitary fashion to prevent disease outbreak as part of the handling ritual. Similarly, with termites, those sick and dead termites are properly dealt with to ensure that the colony's hygiene is maintained at a high level. Though necrophagy

Fig. 1: Queen termite is intensively groomed by worker termites

sounds 'disrespectful', it is acted upon as an ecological requirement, especially when the benefits (alternative protein source and incompetent worker abolishment from colony) outweigh the losses (the risk of pathogen spread) that can be potentially borne by a given colony.

References

Neoh, Kok-Boon, Yeap Beng-Keok, Kunio Tsunoda, Tsuyoshi Yoshimura, and Lee Chow-Yang. 2012. Do Termites Avoid Carcasses? Behavioral Responses Depend On the Nature of the Carcasses. *PLoS ONE* 7: e36375.doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0036375

Rebeca B. Rosengaus, Amy B. Maxmen, Laran E. Coates, and James F.A. Traniello. 1998. Disease Resistance: a Benefit of Sociality in the Dampwood Termite *Zootermopsis angusticollis* (Isoptera: Termopsidae). *Behavioral Ecology and Sociobiology* 44: 125-134.

James F.A. Traniello, Rebeca B. Rosengaus, and Keely Savoie. 2002. The Development of Immunity in a Social Insect: Evidence for the Group Facilitation of Disease Resistance. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 99: 6838-6842.

Sustainable use of Rich Bird Diversity in "Biomass Society"

Motoko S. Fujita
Researcher CSEAS

Human beings have long coexisted with living organisms for food, medicine, constructions, and clothes. Living organisms constitute an ecosystem, which resides at a higher categorical scale, such as a "tropical rain forest ecosystem" or "mangrove ecosystem." These living organisms and ecosystems have numerous direct and indirect functions which benefit human well-being. In tropical countries in Southeast Asia, where a wide range of organisms have created some of the richest biodiversity and ecosystems in the world, rich and diverse peoples and cultures have also been created. Tropical societies benefit highly from this rich biodiversity. One of the outstanding cultures that derive from the existing rich bird fauna is "Bird Fortune Telling" of the Iban people in Borneo. They have used the occurrence of certain bird species to decide their behavior for a better future. Another example is keeping wild birds at home by Indonesian (mostly Javan) people. The Javanese people are known to have a tremendous amount of bird species in trade. Birds that have beautiful songs such as White-rumped Shama (*Copsychus malabaricus*), or those that can mimic human talk such as Hill Myna (*Gracula religiosa*) have a higher asking price. Keeping birds at home can be observed in many temperate countries including Japan, China and some countries in Europe, but those in Indonesia are characterized by being kept as part of a widespread pastime that has deep cultural roots in Java, and its high diversity of bird species. The Kayan people in Borneo have used the tail feather of Hornbill, especially Rhinoceros Hornbill (*Buceros rhinoceros*), for their traditional hats and other ornaments. Birds' nest has been harvested and traded since the 16th century from Southeast Asia to China. What this shows us is that birds, especially forest birds, have been deeply related to their livelihood and culture.

Scarlet-rumped Trogon (*Harpactes duvaucelii*) is restricted to living in the dense tropical rain forest.

However, nowadays, bird diversity is decreasing in most tropical areas. In Malaysia and Indonesia, where tropical rain forests are characterized by the richest biodiversity and ecosystems in the world, there are two significant reasons for biodiversity decline; overexploitation and habitat change. Straw-headed Bulbul (*Pycnonotus zeylanicus*), for example, is one of the nearly extinct bird species due to overexploitation. This species is known to live in lowland forests, but now it is quite difficult to observe. Many other forest bird species are now under threat due to habitat change due to deforestation and forest degradation. More and more forests are converted into agricultural land, oil palm, acacia, and rubber plantations. Intensive logging activities also affect bird habitats. Since most birds live in tropical rainforest ecosystems, disturbances to forests result in a decrease of bird diversity in many areas, which in turn affect traditional cultures as well. Only a few old Iban people can practice "Bird Fortune Telling" in Borneo. Some bird species are now difficult to see in the bird market in Indonesia. Since Biomass Society is the one which they share with rich living organisms and ecosystems for both their livelihood and culture, it is essential for society to conserve biodiversity.

How do birds respond to habitat changes and human activities? What is appropriate landscape management? Logging activities are thought to affect bird diversity, but long-term research has revealed that logged forests can be a habitat for many bird species, if they are managed sustainably (Meijaard et al. 2005). Bird species that are known to be sensitive to logging activities include terrestrial insectivore species, and low- to mid-understory flycatchers. Trogons (*Harpactes* spp.), woodpeckers (Picidae), wren-babblers (*Kenopia striata* and *Napothera* spp.) and flycatchers (*Cyornis* spp.) have all been observed as declining in logged forests. On the other hand, canopy-feeding species and frugivore and nectarivore species are known to be resistant to logging and do not decline in logged forests. Although there are several species that are affected by logging, many species are still found in logged forests that have suffered minimal ecological impact. Therefore, sustainably managed logged forests can be considered an option for biodiversity conservation in tropical rain forests.

Yet, it is modern agricultural land and plantation that has huge negative impacts on biodiversity. Forested areas are first logged, and then burned if needed to convert the land into cropland or for plantation use. This conversion definitely clears all the living organisms including birds, animals, plants, insects and microorganisms which made up parts of the original forest ecosystem. These are completely altered and change into another ecosystem. Planted acacia forests, for example, look like nice forests, but they actually used herbicide and very few other trees exists inside them. The use of herbicides causes the decline of insect and fruit diversity, which is quite important as a food source for birds. As a result of the conversion of natural forest to planted acacia forest, sallying insectivore species, usually inhabit dense tropical rain forest, such as trogons, broadbills, drongos, jungle-flycatchers, and philentomas. These are known

Sustainable use of Rich Bird Diversity in "Biomass Society"

Jungle rubber forest is managed extensively and lots of native trees, shrubs, and herbs can be seen.

Building Swiftlet farmhouse in Sarawak, Malaysia.

Edible-nest Swiftlet (*Aerodramus fuciphagus fuciphagus*) in the farmhouse.

to be absent from planted acacia forests. On the other hand, the extensive management of rubber plantations is known to increase bird diversity to some extent. Known as *Jungle Rubber* on Sumatra island in Indonesia, plantation workers plant rubber trees with very limited management practices such as weeding, the use of herbicide, pesticides and fertilizers. Therefore, many other trees, bushes and herbs are seen in extensively managed rubber forests, which could be a habitat for several forest bird species. Compared to modern and intensively managed rubber gardens and planted acacia forest, more forest birds have been seen in extensively managed rubber forest (Danielsen and Heegaard 1995). But, extensively managed rubber forest cannot be a substitute for natural tropical rain forest. Even though species diversity is higher in extensively managed rubber forest, the community composition in rubber and natural tropical rain forest is quite different. Therefore, natural tropical rain forest has an irreplaceable value in terms of bird diversity conservation, especially in regards to dense tropical forest species. Extensively managed rubber forest, on the other hand, could be an important habitat for birds in open forest environments in village areas. From a productive point of view, extensive management is not preferred. But in Sumatra island, an extensive way of managing rubber has been used for decades, by local villagers who at the same time, possess many other crops.

The sustainable utilization of bio-resources has been a central issue in "Biomass Society." Among all forest products of tropical East Asia, birds' nests are one of the most valuable products in Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam and Malaysia. Two species of swiftlet produce edible birds' nests, which are known as a Chinese delicacy: Edible-nest Swiftlet (*Aerodramus fuciphagus* hereinafter referred as to *A. fuciphagus*) and Black-nest Swiftlet (*Aerodramus maximus*, hereinafter referred as to *A. maximus*). Both species are similar in morphology, but they can be distinguished by their nests; *A. fuciphagus* produce a "white nest" with less feathers incorporated, while *A. maximus* produce a "black nest" with more feathers incorporated in them. Both nests have been harvested and traded between Southeast Asia and China for hundreds of years. In the mountain area of Borneo Island, where limestone forms natural caves, several are known to produce black and white nests, and these have been treated as property inherited and passed down from parents to children kids. In some areas, caves belong to the whole community, and each family or group has the right to harvest in rotation.

Since birds' nest-yield much money to the cave owner, they try to maximize nest production by frequently harvesting all the nests. This means that all the nests which still have eggs or chicks have been harvested, before the fledglings leave them. This has led to the reduction of the swiftlet population, as they

did not allow parents to breed. Therefore, the nest production in Bornean limestone cave significantly declined by the end of 20th century.

However, at the end of the 20th century, an outstanding technique originated from Java Island, Indonesia, that revolutionized the birds' nest industry known as "swiftlet farming." Before the technique was introduced, birds' nest harvesting was a tough and dangerous job. People needed to go into the dark cave, harvest the nest that is high up in the cave ceiling, using a handmade ladder that looks like a big tripod made of bamboo or timber. This meant that some people died when they fell from the top of the ladder while harvesting the nests. Caves in Java were one of the most difficult places to enter, since they are mostly located on coastal cliffs, and the cave entrance is located either in the upper part of the cliff, which is difficult to enter into, or the lateral part of the cliff which required the use of small ships to enter from the sea. Swiftlet farming is a mixture of several techniques; (1) building and maintaining a farmhouse, (2) calling the birds, and (3) the cross fostering of eggs. Out of these, the third technique was the most outstanding and influential one. The cross fostering of swiftlet eggs is quite unique and considered as "artificial brood parasitism." The problem that people faced after building a farmhouse is that other species, *Collocalia esculenta* entered the structure. This is a widespread species that usually make nests under roofs. What people did is that they changed the egg of *C. esculenta* with that of *A. fuciphagus* in its nest and let the *C. esculenta* parents hatch and rear the *A. fuciphagus* chicks. After the chicks left the nest, people then changed the condition of the farmhouse, by closing the window left only with small openings and darkened the room so no light penetrated from outside, to make it resemble the cave environment. Since the *Collocalia* group does not have "ecolocating" ability such as the *Aerodramus* groups, they cannot enter the farmhouse without light. Thus, the farmhouse becomes occupied by *A. fuciphagus*.

At present, this farmhouse can be seen everywhere in Java, Sumatra, Kalimantan, Sarawak, and the Malay Peninsula. Thanks to the spread of farmhouses in Indonesia, and a subsequent population increase, swiftlets were not listed in the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) appendix, that bans the international trade of bioresources. This technique has increased the abundance of all the whole birds' nest that are in trade. Many Indonesian, mainly Chinese-Indonesians has made big money through nest production. However, except for Java, the bird that goes into the farmhouses is different from the subspecies that was originally seen in each place. *A. fuciphagus fuciphagus* is the Javan subspecies that is used for farmhouse production. They are quite adaptive to many places mostly in the wetlands of Sumatra, Kalimantan and Sarawak, whereas other subspecies such as *A. fuciphagus vestitus* do not go into the farmhouse and its range is still restricted to the limestone caves in Borneo. The rapid dominance of Javan subspecies *A. fuciphagus fuciphagus* might have some impact on the ecology of native subspecies, but very little is known. This subspecies is a "successful" species that symbiotically coexists alongside human-beings. What has made the differences of adaptability between different subspecies is still unknown. What remains is to clarify the biology of the swiftlet and its ecology and environment, for future sustainable birds' nest harvesting and production in Southeast Asia.

References

Danielsen, F. and Heegaard, M. 1995. The Birds of Bukit Tigapuluh, Southern Riau, Sumatra. *KUKILA* 7:99-120.

Meijaard, E., Sheil, D., Nasi, R., Augeri, D., Rosenbaum, B., Iskandar, D., Setyawati, T., Lammertink, M., Rachmatika, I., Wong, A., Soehartono, T., Stanley, S. and O'Brien, T. 2005. *Life after Logging: Reconciling Wildlife Conservation and Production Forestry in Indonesian Borneo*. CIFOR. Bogor: Indonesia.

From Dead Zone to Destination: Tourism and the Charting of the BIMP-EAGA Subregion

Lou Antolihao JSPS Postdoctoral Fellow CSEAS
Hiromu Shimizu Professor CSEAS

"Equator Asia," the new tourism promotion tagline of BIMP-EAGA (Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines – East ASEAN Growth Area), was launched in Bandar Seri Begawan in January 2010 with much enthusiasm and optimism. Not only did the much-touted "growth polygon" come up with a more catchy tourism promotion brand, but it also capped an important milestone in its two-decade long effort to integrate the different areas in its vast territory. Tourism development in BIMP-EAGA, therefore, provides a valuable insight into on the process of regional integration and on how newly-charted geo-bodies can serve as platforms not only to promote economic development, but also to highlight forgotten cultural linkages and other possibilities for building a wider regional community.

Instantly, the term "Equator Asia" hints of sun-drenched paradisiacal places located at the center of the world. Indeed, geographically, it has a focal location although in political and economic terms, the subregion has long subsisted on the peripheries of development. Except for the small sultanate of Brunei Darussalam, which is entirely situated in the BIMP-EAGA, the other component areas of subregion share common characteristics of considerable distance from their national capitals. This political remoteness apparently hampered the immediate access to some of the essential infrastructure, investment, and other development incentives. Moreover, the weak grasp of state power has turned these peripheral territories into havens for pirates, insurgents, and terrorists. This condition resulted in security issues and overall social instability, particularly in some parts of Indonesia and the Philippines. Since the 1960s, rampant violence and relative underdevelopment has given the area the negative image of a "dead zone."

East ASEAN growth area. Source: www. bimp-eaga.org

BIMP-EAGA is made up of the entire sultanate of Brunei Darussalam; the federal states of Sabah and Sarawak, the federal territory of Labuan in Eastern Malaysia; the islands of Mindanao and Palawan in the Philippines; all of the provinces in Kalimantan, Sulawesi, the Maluku island chain, and Irian Jaya in Indonesia. It covers a land area of approximately 1.54 million square kilometers and is home to about 55 million people. The "growth polygon" was launched in 1994 to promote economic development, the lack of which was largely seen as a major contributing factor to the security problems and other issues that have hounded the subregion. By bringing down national barriers, both the public and private sectors were afforded opportunities to expand their resource base and market area into its cross-border neighbors. It was hoped that this strategy would improve export competitiveness and enhance the attractiveness of the subregion to local and foreign investors (BIMP-EAGA 2008). A smooth take-off was untimely shot down by the turbulence that arose in the aftermath of the 1997 Financial Crisis. Since early 2000s, efforts to revitalize BIMP-EAGA has steadily gained momentum. However, the volatile global economic system as well as the changing national and regional political environment has both served as hindrances in regaining the overall vibrancy which defined its early years.

Tourism as an Engine of Growth

Since its inception, the proponents of the BIMP-EAGA have set their eyes on tourism to be one of the "main pillars" of the subregion's development. The industry's good prospects were made convincing by the steadily rising number of visitors to its various tourist destinations. From 1.5 million in 1995, international tourist arrivals rose to 3.6 million in 2006, further increasing to 4.5 million in 2009 (BIMP-EAGA 2010). Apart from its strong potential for growth, the industry was also valued for its capacity to foster collaboration among stakeholders from the four member countries. With these good prospects, the subregion aimed to transform the expansive seas and vast rainforests that have long served as barriers between the component areas into corridors of integrated tourist destinations and other development networks that would link fragmented communities to each other. With its focal role, tourism has been positioned to serve as a catalyst to the development of other industrial sectors through cooperation and partnerships in the public and private sectors.

During the early years of the BIMP-EAGA, a number of important cross-border economic ties were established, which provided a great deal of optimism for its future. Among these projects were the opening of a Malaysian motorcycle factory in Zamboanga City, Philippines; an investment link-up between a construction firm in Sarawak and a logging company in Kalimantan; and other similar transactions in banking, transportation, fisheries, and consumer products (GTZ 2006a, Kurus 1997). The subregion's most prominent project, however, was the Samal Resorts and Casino, a $250 million development, which opened with much fanfare in 1998. The resort complex was built in Davao, Philippines and its main investor is Ekran Berhad, a major real estate conglomerate in Malaysia. Overall, this flagship project reflects the important role that the tourism industry plays in the newly-established subregion.

Unfortunately, the 1997 Financial Crisis and the Muslim insurgency problem in Western Mindanao that escalated into an all-out war during that period applied an untimely brake on the fast-tracking tourism industry in the Davao region. Ultimately, the resort was forced to close its doors in 2000, only two years after its much-publicized opening. Several plans to re-open the resort has been put forward in the past ten years but the large amount of money needed to put it back into operation has deterred potential investors. The Samal Resorts and Casino complex continue to crumble, a persistent reminder of BIMP-EAGA's unfulfilled potential; the encroaching undergrowth serves as a symbolic representation of the various problems that serve as obstacles along its long road to recovery.

Tourists get a chance to learn about an indigenous group through their dance, Monsopiad Cultural Village, Sabah.

Cooperation and Competition

As it tries to respond to the changing economic conditions in the 21st century, BIMP-EAGA shifted from its early growth area model of functional cooperation to a more focused strategy to take advantage of "similarities and complementarities in a narrow range of agribusiness and eco-tourism activities" (ADB 2004: ix). Specifically, this new strategy also encouraged the regionalization of production processes which resulted in the creation of the Joint Tourism Promotion and Marketing Program. Apart from this initiative, the BIMP-EAGA's Joint Tourism Development (JTD) Working Cluster also initiated the establishment of better air connectivity between the subregion's main urban centers; convene conventions for the different tourism industry stakeholders; initiate capability building assistance; and support tourism infrastructure development (BIMP-EAGA 2008).

Despite the availability of a well-crafted platform for cooperation, most of the cross-border tourism development projects were unsuccessful. One of the main reasons for this failure is the fact that those stakeholders who were expected to cooperate were also competitors. With largely comparable attractions such as dive sites, mountain trails, and indigenous culture, component areas compete for the limited number of tourists that venture into the area. Thus when the Sabah-Palawan Pilot Project was started, according to a published report, "Sabah based operators were concerned that the joint venture would lead to a loss of business for their operations since visitors could spend less time in Sabah in order to travel to Palawan" (GTZ 2006b). In addition, tour operators in Malaysia were frustrated with their partners from Kalimantan who acted slowly because they have to deal with red tape in the more centralized Indonesian bureaucracy. Finally, even stakeholders between the neighboring states of Sabah and Sarawak in Malaysia compete with each other. When the Japanese government organized a trip for tourism officials from BIMP-EAGA to promote the recovery of the disaster-ravaged Sendai region, delegates from Sabah voiced their objection when they saw that there are more participants from Sarawak. Apparently, the art of straddling between cooperation and competition is one of the paradoxes of partnerships that the BIMP-EAGA stakeholders have to negotiate as they try to maximize the benefits that they can obtain while trying to cultivate a healthy relationship with other players.

As competitors come with their varying resources and capacities, some tend to benefit more from the opportunities afforded by the expanding industry. In 2010, a report stated that 71 percent of the total tourist arrivals in the subregion go to Sabah and Sarawak (BIMP-EAGA 2010). The rest of the component areas have to rely largely on domestic tourists to sustain themselves. Although this figure can be attributed to a number of factors, it shows that the capacity to attract tourists relies primarily on individual government's (local and national) capacity to build essential infrastructure and formulate good marketing strategies to tap into a volatile international tourism market. In fact, external funding has sustained much of the cooperative efforts. Particularly, the Joint Tourism Marketing and Promotion Program and other cross-border projects were all funded by external agencies such as the Asian Development Bank, the German Technical Cooperation Agency, and the ASEAN-Japan Center. This suggests that without external support, the "Equator Asia" banner will eventually disintegrate into a collage of brochures to promote individual towns, cities, or regions in the subregion as tourist destinations.

Creating a New Asia

Despite its limitations, tourism has successfully put BIMP-EAGA on the world map. "'Equator Asia' will help to promote another

Equator Asia Logo. Source: http://bimpeaganorthsulawesi.org

Asia," wrote Luc Citrinot, the managing editor of a global tourism industry newsletter journal (Citrinot 2010). Apart from raising a greater awareness of the subregion among travelers, the new tourism promotion brand also casts a positive light on a region that has long had an uninviting reputation. From the late 17th century, the area was the location of an earlier form of a "growth triangle." The historian James Warren described a trade relation among the British, the Chinese and the Sulu, which defined much of the economic activity in the area that is now called BIMP-EAGA. According to him:

> **In order to have goods to barter for Chinese tea, the British traded firearms to Sulu in exchange for its sea and forest products. These labor-intensive products in turn needed a large number of slaves to gather them. Such were obtained by the Sulus from the Ilanun and Balangingi Samal in exchange for the guns to be used on their slaving raids throughout the Christian Philippines and much of the rest of Southeast Asia.** (Warren, 1985: xi):

Hence, the area became a notorious haunt of pirates and slave raiders that were only controlled in the late 19th century when the availability of steamships enabled the British, Dutch, and Spanish colonial governments to conduct more efficient patrols. However, piracy activities resurfaced during the post-colonial period when the new struggling nation-states started to loose their grip on the area (Eklof 2005). Later on, the Muslim insurgency in southern Philippines and the Christian-Muslim conflicts in Sulawesi and the Maluku Islands of Indonesia also contributed to escalating security problems. Even the inclusion of Sabah and Sarawak to the Malaysian Federation in 1963 did not transpire peacefully and these two states has since assumed a marginal position vis-à-vis mainstream Peninsular Malaysian society.

Until recently, this unstable peace and order situation and marginal location continued to propagate an image of a "dead zone" where nothing much, in terms of economic development, is going on. Thus, "Equator Asia" is attempting to draw a "renewed image" rather than merely sketching new boundaries to highlight the discovery of a new tourist destination.

References

ADB. 2004. *Prioritizing Strategic Directions for BIMP-EAGA*. Mandaluyong. Metro Manila: Asian Development Bank.

BIMP-EAGA. *2010. Community-Based Ecotourism Strategy, 2011-2015*. Kota Kinabalu: BIMP-EAGA Facilitation Center.

BIMP-EAGA. 2008. *Handbook and Directory*. Kota Kinabalu: BIMP-EAGA Business Council and the German Technical Cooperation Agency.

Citrinot, Luc. 2010. Equator Asia Gives Way to BIMP-EAGA, eTN Global Travel News. http://www.eturbonews.com/14118/bimp-eaga-gives-way-equator-asia. (accessed 14 August 2012)

Eklof, Stefan. 2005. The Return of Piracy: Decolonization and International Relations in a Maritime Border, 1959-63 *Working Paper 15*. Center for East and Southeast Asian Studies, Lund University, Sweden.

German Technical Cooperation Agency (GTZ). 2006a. *Unity Beyond Borders, Progress Across Frontiers – Brunei Darissalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines-East ASEAN Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA)*. Manila: GTZ.

———. 2006b. *Tourism Development in BIMP-EAGA*. Brunei Darissalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines-East ASEAN Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA). Manila: GTZ.

Kurus, Bilson. 1997. The East ASEAN Growth Area: Prospects and Challenges, in Mohd. Johari, Bilson Kurus, and Janiah Zaini's *BIMP-EAGA Integration: Issues and Challenges*. Kota Kinabalu: Institute for Development Studies.

Warren, James, 1985. *The Sulu Zone 1768-1898: The Dynamics of External Trade, Slavery, and Ethnicity in the Transformation of a Southeast Asian Maritime State*. Quezon City: New Day Publishers.

Locating 'Green Neoliberalism,' and Other Forms of Environmental Governance in Southeast Asia

Keith Barney
Former Researcher CSEAS

In contemporary Lao PDR (Laos), rural areas and communities are experiencing relatively rapid socio-economic and ecological transformations. As part of my postdoctoral fellowship at Kyoto University, in April 2012, I made a return visit to a number of research locations in southern Laos. In these locations, new foreign investments in agri-business, hydropower, and mining are driving a 'nature-intensive' development strategy (Coronil, 2000). For the Government of Lao PDR (GoL), attracting quality foreign investment and promoting the sustainable management of natural resources, represents the primary model for increasing state revenues, and delivering improved public services.

The stakes for local communities across Laos are significant. For critics (e.g. Goldman, 2001), Lao resource policy, as supported through the development banks and donors, represents a "green-neoliberal" development model, which will bind local people and ecologies to the logics of global commodity capitalism, and usher in new patterns of uneven development, and new resource exclusions. Indeed, in neighboring Cambodia, Springer (2009) argues that neoliberalism and the process of neoliberalization, represents a 'foremost causal factor' in the continuation of authoritarian politics and political violence in that country.

Yet, there appears a paradox with such portrayals of neoliberalism as a hegemonic form of political-economic power in Southeast Asia. The other side of the neoliberal coin involves the continuing significance of non-neoliberal, or "illiberal" forms of governance. In Lao PDR, examples of illiberal or quasi-neoliberal institutions include the military; most institutions of the Lao bureaucracy; elites connected to the Lao People's Revolutionary Party (LPRP); as well as private entities whose primary mode of profit generation is organized through patronage and rent-seeking as opposed to market-based competition. There exists an internal tension in what, in the case of Indonesia, Hadiz and Robison (2005) have called "neoliberal reform and illiberal consolidation," and what Felker (2008, 294) terms "illiberal adaptation." I suggest that the contradictions and the interplay between neoliberal and illiberal forces are important to locating the real stakes of the political-economic and agrarian-environmental transitions proceeding across Southeast Asia.

In this essay I first outline how different scholars have approached the concepts of *neoliberalism* and *neoliberal natures*, before turning to brief examples that highlight some of the advantages, as well as the limits, of the neoliberalization concept for understanding contemporary transformations in rural Laos. The essay finishes with a call for further grounded research on the connections and contradictions between neoliberal ideologies, actor-networks, and institutions on the one hand; and the persistence of illiberal forms of power and authority in Southeast Asia on the other.

Neoliberalism and its Variegations

In the past decade, a vast and largely critical academic literature has been established around the concept and ideology of neoliberalism, and of neoliberal nature. While this literature is far too extensive to review here, as Bakker (2010) argues, neoliberalism can be understood as a political doctrine, an economic project, a set of regulatory practices, and a process of subject formation and mode of governmentality, which are ultimately oriented around the concept of "governing through markets." Castree (2010) identifies the key policy tenets of neoliberalism as including *inter alia*: privatization; marketization; state deregulation; market-based re-regulation; the rise of civil society to replace state functions; and the making of 'self-sufficient' individuals and communities.

Although neoliberalism is clearly an ideology that originated first in the West, it was first applied as a national policy framework in Pinochet's Chile (see Kay, 2002). Some observers place the high water mark of neoliberal economic ideology in Southeast Asia with the 1997-98 Asian financial crisis, and the IMF-led bailout and conditions negotiated for Indonesia and Thailand. In the 15-year period since the crisis, East Asian governments have established huge foreign-exchange reserves as part of an explicit strategy to deflect a neoliberal "Washington Consensus."

To counter simplistic ideas of a spreading homogenous geography of neoliberalism, scholars have added nuance through the associated terms 'neoliberalisation' and 'variegated neoliberalism' (Brenner, Peck and Theodore, 2010). These terms indicate the contingent, process-based, and articulated relationships of neoliberal actors, policies and processes with national to local institutions, discourses, and environments. The role of the state under neoliberalism is conceptualized in a complex manner; through both the idea of rollback reforms (Reagan-Thatcherism) and rollout regulatory reforms (Blair-Clinton Third Way neoliberalism). Just as the market is created and regulated by the state, 'actually existing' neoliberalism can similarly be understood as articulating with the state and operating through domestic social institutions. This can produce some unexpected juxtapositions, such as neoliberal-authoritarianism under military rule in Augusto Pinochet's Chile (Kay, 2002), or, what Springer (2011), has called a system of neoliberalism-patronage-kleptocracy-violence in Hun Sen's Cambodia.

Yet, other scholars have argued that neoliberal ideology has only selectively been adopted and deployed by domestic classes, actors and institutions in the Southeast Asian region, often as a targeted strategy to buttress the political-economic power of ruling regimes. Much of the substance of neoliberal reforms pushed by donors have been deflected or remain unimplemented. Pinning down what specifically is entailed in the process of neoliberalization in particular contexts of

Southeast Asia can therefore be quite challenging. Indeed, different political scientists have conceptualized dominant governance patterns in regional countries such as the Philippines and Cambodia through the logics of patronage or neo-patrimonialism (e.g. Hutchcroft, 1998; Cock, 2010). Moreover, in many Southeast Asian countries the role of illiberal actors such as the military in the economy and in natural resource management can be significant. Laos and Vietnam are nominally communist, 'post-socialist' states where neoliberal actors and economic reforms, while present, have arguably been employed in a highly selective and partial manner by the respective ruling parties (see Gainsborough, 2010 on Vietnam).

Concepts of neo-liberalism and neo-patrimonialism indicate distinct and in many ways competing modes of rule. Neoliberalism ultimately indicates rule through market logics, not rule through political repression, political assassination, kleptocracy, rent seizing, or clientelistic-patronage. Concepts such as neoliberalism and neopatrimonialism are therefore collapsed together through terms such as 'articulated neoliberalism' at some cost to conceptual clarity. Hybrid terms such as 'variegated neoliberalism' also indicate that it is the 'neoliberal' component which is the focus for analysis and the most powerful, dynamic force under consideration. However, in other regional studies different authors have switched their emphasis, to non-neoliberal national and local institutions. Hill, Park and Saito (2012: 19) remark on the extent of changes that would be required for East Asian states to become primarily neoliberal in character:

> **"For East Asian states to move to a neoliberal market system means not only dismantling existing developmental institutions, but also creating new neoliberal ones. Full conversion would require changes at all levels of East Asian societies: laws, administrative practices, norms, and values..."**

Thus, we can think of neoliberal- *influenced* (but not necessarily neoliberal-dominated) state-society relations in Asia, such as how Gainsborough (2010) describe in Vietnam, and Hadiz and Robison (2005) in Indonesia.

In the 'fragile' post-conflict Mekong states of Laos and Cambodia, one might predict that the global neoliberal project would have made especially strong inroads. Yet, in Laos, and Cambodia, neoliberalism operates within a distinct national-institutional framework which is not always weak. These countries are also strongly authoritarian, where the rule of dominant parties and their patronage systems are unchallenged. Theorists of neoliberalism at times appear to underplay the role of such domestic, illiberal power groupings in Southeast Asian states in considering the actual outcomes of political-economic reforms.

A second factor is introduced by the significant divide between policy and practice — and it is in this sense that Laos and Cambodia could be considered as 'weak' states, particularly at the local level. The effects of capacity constraints in the local state further splinters the coherence of any overarching, centrally organized regulatory reform, including neoliberal reforms. Indeed in Laos and Cambodia the management of the most valuable natural resources are rarely free of discretionary elite involvement. Powerful local, provincial or national state officials seek to control valuable resources and the associated resource rents, and such forms of rent-seizing behaviour are often the rule, not the exception.

These characteristics of developing Southeast Asian states challenge a coherent conceptualization of a dominant program of variegated neoliberalization. This is not to suggest that neoliberal actors, policies and reforms are not present in the region. From an analytical perspective, perhaps the most interesting task is to examine how the entry of neoliberal forces and institutions into the Southeast Asian region alters the balance of political-economic power within the state, and thereby produces new geographical formations of order and authority, as opposed to arguing for an interpretation which seeks to explain all major state transformations as ultimately reflective of a global hegemonic process of neoliberalization. To understand the emergence of neoliberal forms of governance, and also the power of other, competing or alternative governance patterns, we need to further understand how political-economic power and authority is organized in Southeast Asian states.

Green Neoliberalism in Southeast Asia

Neoliberal-informed programs and polices have been applied to numerous environmental sectors in Southeast Asia. New programs of marketization (including the expansion of new global boom crops such as coffee, shrimp, oil palm, rubber and pulpwood), new land titling and decentralization programs, agribusiness concessions, new market-based policy and legal reforms, free trade agreements, certification systems, and community-based resource management initiatives, are consistent with a neoliberalization framework. Neoliberalism has also made inroads into the 'final frontier,' of environmental conservation programs, payments for ecosystem services and carbon trading.

It is notable however that few of the key scholarly studies of neoliberal nature have been well grounded in Southeast Asian contexts. A more precise analytic of the real discursive power, as well as the limits of neoliberal nature and environmental governance formations in the region, would seem to be useful. In approaching this issue, we might consider the emergence of sub-national or transboundary spaces of neoliberal environmental governance, as well as various hybrid historical-geographical formations. Another approach might involve distinguishing between 'shallow' or 'deep' programs of neoliberal governance (e.g. Dressler and Roth, 2012). Alternatively, we might question whether a certain sector, policy framework or spatial-territorial-environmental configuration could be considered as an example of 'variegated neoliberalism' in any meaningful sense at all.

Neoliberal Environmental Transformations in Rural Laos

In Laos, many of the manifestations of a neoliberal mode of environmental governance are present. Yet, if one digs beneath

the surface of boosterish donor or company reports, local realities and the actual outcomes of projects in Laos can be significantly more complex. Global 'neoliberal' World Bank sponsored eco-certified forests are located next to military extractive logging enterprises, semi-coercive contract farming enterprises, or semi-commercial-based agricultural systems. In other areas, 'neoliberal' state-donor organized land use zoning projects are affected by coercive, state-led upland minority resettlement programs. Some sustainable hydropower or mining projects appear to be modeled on best practice neoliberal approaches, while other extractive resource projects do not appear to be governed through any coherent legal process at all. Neoliberal-linked policies and interventions are overlaid upon a distinct geographical-historical context and landscape in Laos, with its particular sedimented histories of Cold War conflict, and post-socialist state-society relations.

One of the most high profile examples of neoliberal environmental governance in Laos is the World Bank/Government of Finland supported natural forest management program. This project has embodied many key neoliberal rationalities: marketization of forest resources; the role of international institutions and experts; the dismantling of Lao state forestry enterprises; the creation of sustainable forest communities; new spatial forest-land zoning practices; the key role for global eco-certification bodies, and so forth. Yet, if one digs deeper, this apparently dominant mode of governance appears to come undone. Required forest inventories, harvesting plans and timber tracking procedures are not followed by state officials or sub-contractors; elite-linked logging firms continue to harvest and clear forest illegally; and the planned sale of eco-certified timber never quite materializes (Jonsson, 2006; Hodgdon, 2010)

Overtly illiberal interventions in the Lao forestry sector are commonplace. In 2006, a WWF eco-certified sustainable project in southern Sekong province was closed by the provincial government, when its establishment challenged key actors involved in discretionary timber extraction. More recently, in 2012, a donor-led participatory REDD forest management project located inside a National Protected Area in Xayaboury province, near the Thai border, was reportedly closed by the Lao government, due to the establishment of new military buffer protection zone along the international border. Much to the frustration of international agencies, neoliberalism is far from the dominant mode of governance in play in the Lao forest sector. It is still the Politburo, the military, provincial governors, and their networks in Laos who largely decide how forests will be managed, where and when logging will be conducted, and who will control the revenues.

With respect to the plantation and agribusiness sector, neoliberal modes of governance forestry are evident, for example, the entrance of major multinational corporations, the enclosure and privatization of formerly common property resources; the real subsumption of nature into more commodified forms such as high-yielding eucalyptus or rubber trees; and the role of eco-certification. Yet, corporate investments in forestry are still "grounded" in Laos in relation to various alternate governing logics of the state— such as the discretionary role of various state agencies or individuals in allocating concessions; the development of state-private sector joint venture partnerships; and the linkages between agribusiness development and GoL priorities around the elimination of swidden agriculture and the resettlement of upland minority communities. In an example of neoliberal concessionary politics meeting regional geopolitics and security concerns, there are reports that a major Chinese pulpwood company operating in southern Laos is experiencing difficulties due to the proximity of their proposed concession area to the Lao-Vietnamese border zone, a strategic zone for the Vietnamese government. In other and more locally complex ways, the legacy of Cold War still affects how land is allocated for concession development (see e.g. Dwyer, Forthcoming; Baird and Le Billon, 2012).

Lastly, the commodification of nature under a neoliberal investment regime can lead to unexpected outcomes that appear to escape neoliberal rationalities entirely. In Barney (2011) I described the unpredictable and cascading social-ecological outcomes that have developed between a major hydropower and plantation forestry projects, and smallholder livelihoods in a village in central Laos. In this community, the company-led neoliberal compensation and mitigation program aimed at creating 'self-sufficient,' commercially-productive farmer-subjects, failed to reach the intended beneficiaries, and villagers have been left to navigate through the damaging transformations in landscape and livelihood that these projects have left in their wake. Local responses have including widespread illegal youth outmigration to Thailand.

Failed industrial tree plantation scheme, Hinboun District, Laos, May 2012

Conclusion: Grounding Neoliberal Natures in Southeast Asia

The result of the transformations I have described in Laos are a complex hybrid between a neoliberal influenced global political economy, the competing rationalities and uneven capacities of the Lao state, and grounded natural histories and social-landscapes. To reduce this disparate assemblage to a derivative sub-type— to a form of 'green neoliberalism with Lao characteristics'— would, I suggest, be to miss the most crucial and indeed interesting aspects of how national to local factors

strongly influence the making of governable or ungovernable spaces and communities in the country. Neoliberal natures are an important phenomenon to understand. But I suggest that neoliberalism is not currently the dominant mode of political or environmental regulation in much of rural Southeast Asia. Indeed, the concept of neoliberalization indicates a process of becoming increasingly neoliberal in character, which first needs to be demonstrated, not assumed.

While respecting the advantages of parsimonious conceptual frameworks, my emphasis has shifted towards 'grounding' global-neoliberal influenced economic processes in contexts and in places. Grounded research points not just to how neoliberal institutions and ideologies might influence and become embedded within states, social relations and environmental contexts, but also and importantly, to the persistence and continued significance of illiberal actors and institutions, and non-neoliberal modes of power and environmental governance in Southeast Asia.

References:

Baird, Ian. G. and Philippe Le Billon. 2012. Landscapes of Political Memories: War Legacies and Land Negotiations in Laos. *Political Geography*. 31: 290-300.

Barney, Keith. 2011. *Grounding Global Forest Economies: Resource Governance and Commodity Power in Rural Laos*. PhD. Dissertation, York University, Toronto, Canada.

Bakker, Karen. 2010. The Limits of 'Neoliberal Natures': Debating Green Neoliberalism. *Progress in Human Geography*. 34(6): 715-735.

Brenner, Neil; Jamie Peck; and Nik Theodore. 2010. Variegated Neoliberalization: Geographies, Modalities, Pathways. *Global Networks*. 10(2): 1470-2266.

Castree, Noel. 2010. Neoliberalism and the Biophysical Environment: A Synthesis and Evaluation of the Research. *Environment and Society: Advances in Research*. 1: 5-45.

Cock, Andrew Robert. 2010. External Actors and the Relative Autonomy of the Ruling Elite in Post-UNTAC Cambodia. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*. 41(2): 241-265.

Coronil, Fernando. 2000. Towards a Critique of Globalcentrism: Speculations on Capitalism's Nature. *Public Culture*. 12(2): 351-374.

Dwyer, Michael. (Forthcoming). 'Micro-geopolitics: Capitalizing Security in Laos's Golden Quadrangle', Geopolitics Special Issue on the Geopolitics of Agriculture.

Dressler, Wolfram and Robin, Roth. 2012. The Good, The Bad and the Contradictory: Neoliberal Conservation Governance in Rural Southeast Asia. *World Development*. 39(5): 851-862.

Felker, Greg. 2008. The Political Economy of Illiberal Adaptation. In Kuhonta, Erik, Dan Slater, and Tuong. Vu eds. *Southeast Asian in Political Science: Theory, Region and Qualitative Analysis*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Gainsborough, Martin. 2010. Present but not Powerful: Neoliberalism, the State and Development in Vietnam. *Globalizations*. 7(4): 475-488.

Goldman, Michael. 2001. Constructing an Environmental State: Eco-Governmentality and other Transnational Practices of a 'Green' World Bank. *Social Problems*. 48(4): 499-523.

Hadiz, Vedi R, and Richard Robison 2005. Neoliberal Reform and Illiberal Consolidation: the Indonesian Paradox. *Journal of Development Studies*. 41(2): 220-241.

Hill, Richard., Bae-Gyoon Park and Asato Saito. 2012. Introduction: Locating Neoliberalism in East Asia. In Park, Bae-Gyoon, Richard Hill, and Asato Saito, eds. *Locating Neoliberalism in East Asia: Neoliberalizing Spaces in Developmental States*. Malden: Blackwell.

Hodgdon, Benjamin D. 2010. Community Forestry in Laos. *Journal of Sustainable Forestry*. 29: 50-78.

Hutchcroft, Paul. 1998. *Booty Capitalism: The Politics of Banking in the Philippines*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Jonsson, Thomas. 2006. *Control of Timber Production: Sustainable Forestry and Rural Development Project, Lao PDR*. Governments of Lao PDR, Finland and World Bank. May, 2006.

Kay, Cristobal. 2002. Chile's Neoliberal Agrarian Transformation and the Peasantry. *Journal of Agrarian Change*. 2(4): 464-501.

Springer, Simon. 2011. Articulated Neoliberalism: The Specificity of Patronage, Kleptocracy, and Violence in Cambodia's Neoliberalization. *Environment and Planning A*. 43: 2254-2570.

Southeast Asia's New High Rollers

Gianluca Bonanno
Research Fellow CSEAS

It does not take an expert to tell that more and more people all over Southeast Asia are enjoying unprecedented economic stability, which goes well along with a strong drive to enjoy life in all of its aspects. And in most cases, all of that comes without too many worries about the future. Saving for harsher times does not seem to be a matter of concern, particularly among the younger generations, and the preferred choice appears to be that of spending. An increasingly thicker portion of the population living in the cities can afford lifestyles unthinkable just ten years ago, and is conspicuously willing to show that off. The expanding economy, higher levels of urbanization, increased mobility, and the indisputable current impossibility to control most of Southeast Asia's intra-regional flows have favoured an almost unstoppable rise of the entertainment industry in the region. As many of those who are familiar with the region would already know, the meaning attached to the word "entertainment" in Southeast Asia is one of a most subjective nature: one that oftentimes blurs the line between legality and illegality. And the current state of the law allows for a much biased interpretation of what is legal and what is not, something too many a time confused (not rarely on purpose) with what is considered to be licit and what is instead deemed as illicit.

For that very reason, borderlands are, more than any other place in the region, perfect havens for setting up such a business. As a matter of fact, in all of mainland Southeast Asia's countries, most of the sectors commonly belonging to the entertainment industry are prohibited by law: gambling just as much as prostitution. At the same time, demand is at a historic peak and turning one's back to rivers of easy money does not quite seem to be the preferred option. Governments and business people have thus craftily thought of a way to meet such a high demand without compromising themselves too much, and have so created some sort of no-man's lands right across their national boundaries, where they have successfully built entertainment complexes depending almost solely on one-time tourists crossing the border for the only purpose of visiting such places.

In a region where development gaps and historical ties often dictate the way countries relate to their neighbors, it is easily understandable how such limbo-like places are being built on the Burmese, Laotian, and Cambodian sides of a common frontier. Lured by easy and oftentimes accountability-proof profits, the above mentioned countries' governments too easily overlook the extremely serious and intricate chain of issues that inevitably ensue from the establishment of such complexes. The case of Poipet on the Thai-Cambodian border best explains the multifaceted implications of such a choice.

The Poipet-Aranyaprathet is a key crossing point between the two countries, linking Bangkok to both Phnom Penh and Siem Reap. From Phnom Penh to the border it is a 410 km, 8-hour ride on the paved and generally well-maintained National Highway 5. Transport services are increasing, but, since local demand is low, still too few. Poipet is a proper city located in Cambodia's Banteay Meanchey Province. The fact that the city hosts the most popular international crossing in the area has undoubtedly accelerated its development, which stands in sharp contrast against the poorer conditions of Banteay Meanchey Province in general. Its official population has doubled over the course of a decade. Border activities and trade in general provide business and job opportunities that attract people from all parts of the country, thus many inhabitants are actually internal labour migrants that have moved in from poorer areas as well as refugee camps that used to populate the same border till not long ago. General uncertainty about ongoing border disputes and a high level of disinformation among locals mean that the largest single source of employment on the Cambodian side is day labour, with eight to ten thousand people crossing the border each day to transport goods. This phenomenon jumps to the eye of even the most inexperienced, as the city's proper urban development is almost inexistent; almost to the same extent as its formal industrial sector. Nonetheless, people continue to move into town and live in extremely precarious conditions on a day-by-day basis. As elsewhere in the region, where the economic gap between the two sides is significant, the weaker part usually survives by reaching a compromise with itself, adjusting to a sort of limbo that allows it to prosper while vaguely controlling the situation. Poipet is unfortunately a place where it could be rather unpleasant to stay overnight at. All of its economy seems to be gravitating around a quite successful entertainment industry concentrated on a strip a land right between the two border gates. It is indeed a no-man's land. Officially it is on Cambodian soil. Practically, Cambodians have restricted access to it. It currently hosts ten (and increasing) fully-equipped casinos and hotels that were built almost uniquely to please clientele from neighboring Thailand. Gambling is prohibited in both countries, and being this strip literally between the gates, Thai visitors are able to reach it without going through Cambodian immigration. Being on Cambodian soil, people working at those places are almost totally Cambodian nationals, but the profits of the business do not seem to remain in Cambodia. Workers at the casinos seem to be rather sure about that, arguing about low wages and economic conditions outside the strip not improving. Moreover, supplies for the casinos are clearly brought in from Thailand every morning.

Corruption at all levels in Poipet is rampant, and the management of land rights in the city are ambiguous, to say the least. Hence, the situation provides little economic benefit to the area. Poipet does not have adequate infrastructure. Brand new transport companies have made their appearance in town, substituting the myriad of private transporters that were available everywhere till not long ago. Prices for their services have largely inflated, although they do not seem to go entirely to the companies. Drivers, many of whom are the same people who used

Poipet Casino

Illegal crossers being repatriated, mostly children.

to do the job individually in the past, are quite talkative persons, and they claim that a good share of the profits go to the police, which, in turn, have allegedly forced all individual drivers to join the new syndicate. The vehicles used are clearly imported from Thailand, be it the vans used by the casinos, the buses that carry tourists to Siem Reap and Phnom Penh, or the Toyota Camry's used by Poipet taxi drivers. All together, the impression is that of a messy border town characterized by a rapid expansion not paralleled by equally rapid and organized development.

But what really stands out in the area is flaunted corruption at all levels, a widespread cancer that pervades the whole of Poipet and appears to be the rule rather than the exception. The transport industry is monopolized by a syndicate that, with the collaborative support of the police force, prohibits any independent exercise of the business. Another syndicate manages the land allocation in town, while a third organized group seems to be in charge of the labor force particularly that connected to the casinos' and hotels' industry. In a city apparently in the hands of local criminal organizations, the living conditions of its inhabitants are extremely precarious, and whilst customs officials taking small bribes could be overlooked, more serious social offences are threatening the future of the area. A good half of the population has come in from the countryside after the establishment of the casinos and the new Rong Klua market on the Thai side. This share of new inhabitants is the most prone to being miserably exploited by people without scruples. Beggars are everywhere to be seen in the area, but the striking majority of them are Cambodian.

But the most serious social issue concerns are the treatment of children and the influx of tourists and gamblers that have encouraged the sex industry to flourish. These overall factors, coupled with the lack of quality, inexpensive education and skill training in Cambodia, have allowed child trafficking to take a stronghold in Poipet. Many times, poor families are lured into sending their children to work in Thailand, with the promise of higher wages, general better conditions and a larger number of tourists staying in Aranyaprathet before proceeding towards other locations in Cambodia.

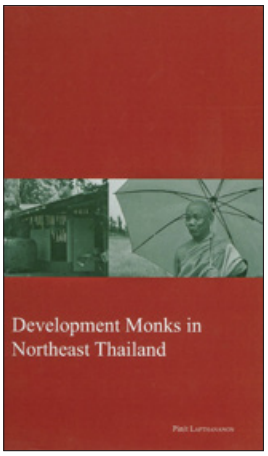
Most of the times these children are eventually trafficked, forced into prostitution and get often involved in drugs. Field-observations are particularly disturbing in regard to this point. Everybody in the area knows that trafficking is rife, yet nobody is willing to talk about it. Statements such as "there are no illegal crossings on our border," "there is no way people can pass through immigration illegally […] because that would require a high level of corruption from both Thai and Cambodian officials," and finally "children might be trafficked, but not on our watch," is what Cambodian officials often repeat. Thai officials seem to be more realistic, or maybe just diplomatic, and say that "trafficking happens through the immigration post [and people] simply cross the border at night, when unseen." In fact, following a pattern common to many other crossings in Southeast Asia, people go willingly and illegally across borders and rivers in the hundreds every month, with many of them thought to be underage. Nevertheless, one farmer, who did not even want to show himself, said that he knows for sure that children have been trafficked inside the vans owned by the casinos, because they are seldom checked.

A Cambodian immigration officer in Poipet said that one of his duties was to bring back the bodies of Cambodians killed in Thailand. According to him, there are several such cases every month, with many of them happening in suspicious circumstances. Because they do not carry papers, it is extremely difficult to identify these people, but many among them appear to be children, thus adding credibility to the above-mentioned allegations.

The fact that so many children are involved in this dirty traffic is in itself disgusting enough, but similar stories are shared by many young men and women, who are often moved to as far as Bangkok. For this very reason, there are several road blocks in both directions, from and to the capital, with police forces carrying out regular random checks, but enforcers are overwhelmed by the incidence of such occurrences. Fortunately, the central authorities of Cambodia have historically been relatively open to the support of NGOs to the poor and marginalized. Hence, leading organ is at ions, first among all World Vision, have recently been organizing awareness-raising activities to awaken locals' public opinion to such issues.

Hopefully, the area will experience a significant improvement in the near future, but with the expanding middle class in Thailand and the badly needed strong currency in Cambodia, entertainment seems too good a vice to quit.

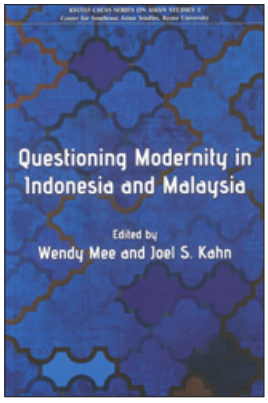
Publications



Kyoto Area Studies on Asia (in English) No. 22

Development Monks in Northeast Thailand

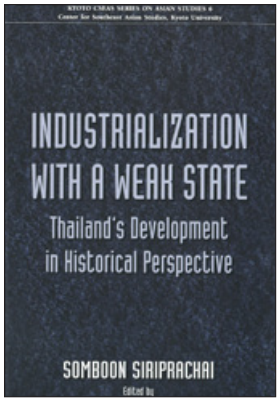
Pinit Lapthananon. 2012. Kyoto University Press



Kyoto CSEAS Series of Asian Studies No. 5 (in English)

Questioning Modernity in Indonesia and Malaysia

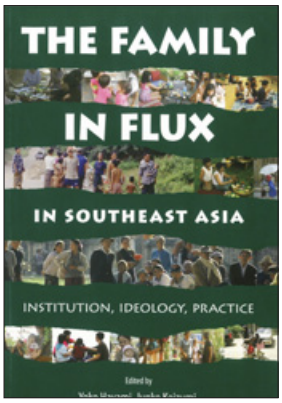
Edited by Wendy Mee and Joel S. Kahn. 2012.



Kyoto CSEAS Series of Asian Studies No. 6 (in English)

Industrialization with a Weak State: Thailand's Development in Historical Perspective

Somboon Siriprachai 2012.



The Family in Flux in Southeast Asia: Institution, Ideology, Practice

Edited by Yoko Hayami, Junko Koizumi, Chalidaporn Songsamphan, and Ratana Tosakul. 2012. Chiang Mai: Kyoto University Press and Silkworm

***Reading Southeast Asia through Area Informatics* (in Japanese)**

Shibayama Mamoru. 2012. Tokyo: Bensei Publishing

Publications

Humanosphere Lectures Vol. 1 (in Japanese)

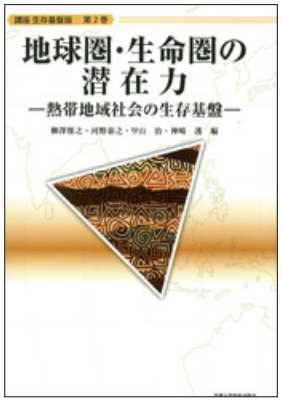
The Tropical Humanosphere in Global History: Beyond the Temperate-zone Perspective

Edited by Kaoru Sugihara, Wakimura Kohei, Fujita Koichi, Tanabe Akio 2012. Kyoto: Kyoto University Press

Humanosphere Lectures Vol. 5 (in Japanese)

Humanosphere Potentiality Index: Beyond the HDI Perspective.

Edited by Takahiro Sato, Taizo Wada, Kaoru Sugihara and Yoichi Mine. Kyoto: Kyoto University Press



Humanosphere Lectures Vol. 2 (in Japanese)

The Potentiality of Geosphere and Biosphere: Exploring the Tropical Humanosphere

Edited by Masayuki Yanagisawa, Kono Yasuyuki, Kozan Osamu, Kanzaki Mamoru. 2012. Kyoto: Kyoto University Press

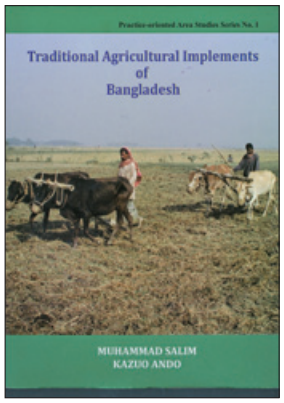
***New Light of Myanmar Economy* (in Japanese)**

Konosuke ODAKA and Fumiharu MIENO, eds. 2012. Tokyo: Keiso-shobo

Humanosphere Lectures Vol. 3 (in Japanese)

Reconstituting the Human Domain: The Potentialities of Tropical Societies

Edited by Hayami Yoko, Nishi Makoto, Kimura Shuhei 2012. Kyoto: Kyoto University Press



Traditional Agricultural Implements of Bangladesh

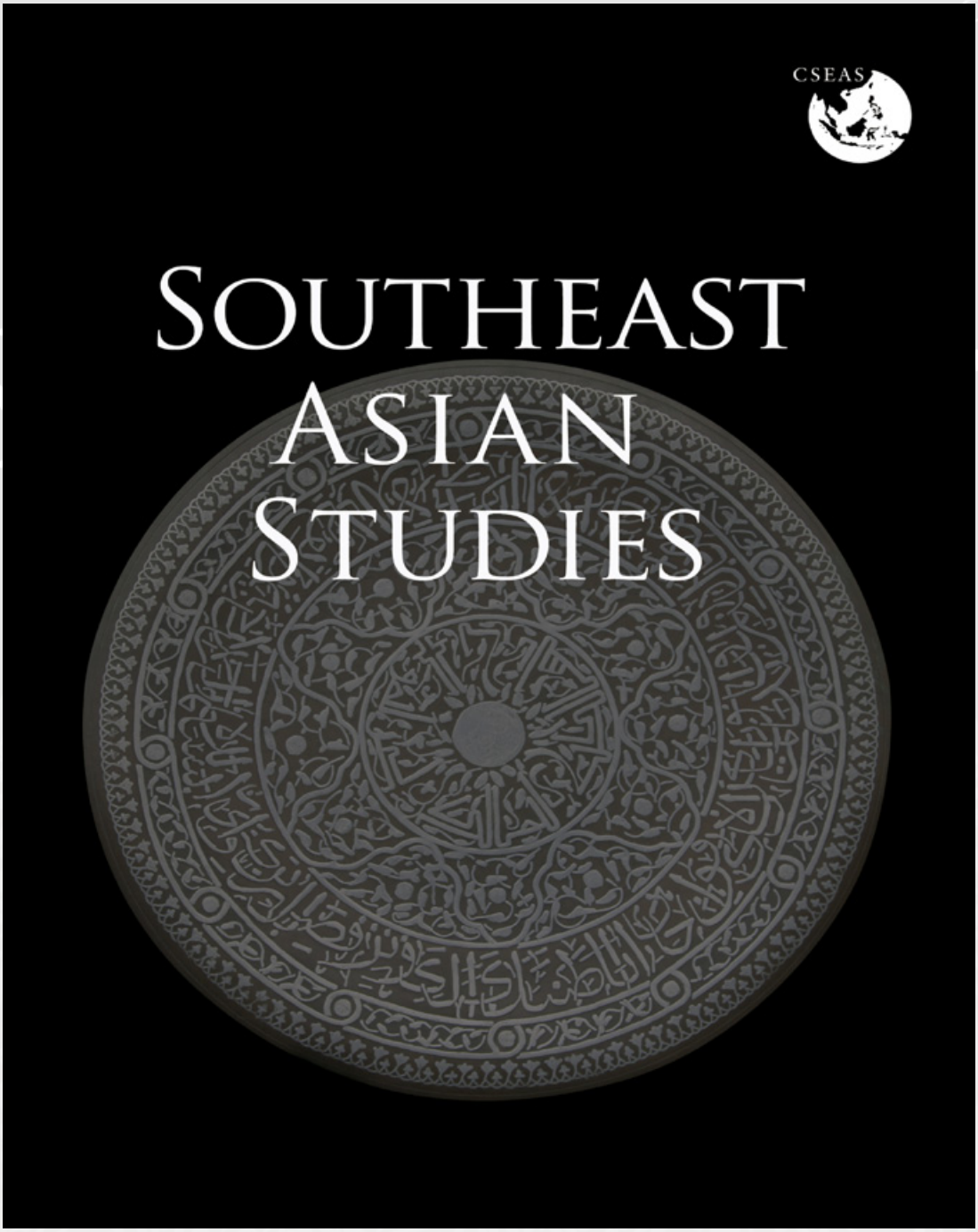
Edited by Muhammad SALIM and Kazuo Ando. 2012. Dhaka, Bangladesh : Rubi Enterprise

Visiting Fellows

CSEAS is accepting applicants semiannually for about 14 positions for scholars and researchers who work on Southeast Asia, or any one of the countries in that region, to spend 3 to 12 months in Kyoto to conduct research, write, or pursue other scholarly activities in connection with their field of study. Since 1975, more than 270 distinguished scholars have availed themselves of the Center's considerable scholarly resources and enjoyed the invigorating atmosphere of scenic Kyoto, the ancient capital of Japan and the main repository of the country's cultural treasures, to pursue their interests in Southeast Asian Area Studies. The Center's multi-disciplinary character and the diverse research interests of its faculty offer visiting scholars an ideal opportunity for the exchange of ideas and the cultivation of comparative perspectives. The highly competitive selection process has brought to the Center in recent years researchers from Southeast Asian countries, Bangladesh, China, Korea, and western countries including the United States and France. The visiting fellows represent various basic disciplines in their study of Southeast Asia, and their official posts in their home institutions include teacher, researcher, librarian, journalist, and NGO worker. Information and Technology (IT) experts who conduct research on Southeast Asia are also joining the Center, not only to manage various database systems but also to construct academic networks for area study throughout the world. Successful applicants receive an appropriate stipend to cover international travel, housing, and living expenses in Kyoto. Research funds will also be provided to facilitate his/her work. Funds will also be allocated for domestic travel, subject to government regulations, and a number of other facilities are available to visiting scholars. Fellows will be expected to reside in Kyoto for the duration of their fellowship period. Fellows are normally invited to deliver a public lecture during their term at the Center and encouraged to submit an article for possible publication in the Center's journal, *Southeast Asian Studies* and to contribute to the online journal *Kyoto Review of Southeast Asia*. CSEAS also received researchers, both Japanese and foreign, who visit on their own funds or on external fellowships.

Name	Period	Affiliation/Position	Research Title
Paderanga, Cayetano Jr. Woo	4.27.2012~9.30.2012	Professor, School of Economics, University of the Philippines, Secretary of Socioeconomic Planning, National Economic and Development Authority	Financial Sector in the Philippines; Technocracy in the Philippines
Riba, Tomo	5.1.2012~10.31.2012	Associate Professor, Department of Geography, Faculty of Environmental Sciences, Rajiv Gandhi University	Shifting Cultivation and Tribal Culture in Arunachal Pradesh, India
Harjono, Hery	6.1.2012~11.30.2012	Professor, Research Center for Geotechnology, Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI)	Building a Soft System of Natural Disaster
Song, Xianfeng	7.1.2012~12.31.2012	Professor, College of Resources and Environment, Graduate University of Chinese Academy of Sciences	Development of Web-GIS framework for Soil Mapping and Modeling of Soil Dynamics for Sustainable Resource Management
Evans, Grant Richard James	8.1.2012~1.31.2013	Academic Advisor, Lao Academy of Social Sciences	Lao Essays
Cairns, Malcolm Foster	9.1.2012~2.28.2013	Independent Environment Anthropologist	The Quest of Naga Headhunters for More Agricultural Land and the Pivotal Role of an Alder Tree
Shih, Virginia Jing-yi	9.1.2012~2.28.2013	Librarian, International and Area Studies Department, University of California, Berkeley	Crossroads of International Southeast Asia Scholarship & Librarianship: the Past, Present and Future
Jeong, Yeonsik	4.1.2012~2.28.2013	Professor, Faculty of International Relations, Changwon National University	Vietnamese Students during Study in Japan Movement (1905-1909)
Islam, Md. Taufiqul	5.11.2012~11.10.2012	Assistant Professor, American International University-Bangladesh (AIUB)	Dimension of Empowerment and Rural Local Government in India: Lesson for Bangladesh
Leveau, Arnaud	6.25.2012~8.21.2012	Ph.D. Candidate, Lyon Institute of East Asian Studies	A Brief Comparison between the Japanese and South Korean Approaches on Southeast Asia: The Case of Thai Studies
Hara, Kimie	7.1.2012~8.7.2012	Professor, Renison Research Professor in East Asian Studies, Renison University College / Departments of History and Political Science, University of Waterloo	After San Francisco: Post-World War II Japanese Peace Treaty and the Regional Conflicts in East Asia
Muhammad, Ahmad	7.1.2012~9.28.2012	Senior Lecturer, Department of Biology, Faculty of Mathematics & Natural Sciences, Riau University	Socio-ecological Study of Adaptations and Sustainability in Indonesian Rubber Smallholdings
Kimura, Ehito	5.20.2012~7.30.2012	Assistant Professor of Political Science, University of Hawai'i at Manoa	Post-authoritarian Politics in Indonesia in a Comparative Perspective
Tejawaree, Jakkree	7.4.2012~8.3.2012	M.A. (IPED), Fordham University	Collaborating Research on International Trade and Foreign Direct Investment during the Political and Economic Transition of Myanmar

List of Visiting Research Scholar, Guest Scholar, Guest Research Associate, Special Researcher, Short-term International Student



Announcement of new *Southeast Asian Studies,* published by the Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University

In April 2012, CSEAS re-launched *Southeast Asian Studies* as an all-English journal. Intended for a regional as well as global readership, *Southeast Asian Studies* will be published three times a year.

The new journal aims to promote excellent, agenda-setting scholarship and provide a forum for dialogue and collaboration both within and beyond the region. ***Southeast Asian Studies*** engages in wide-ranging and in-depth discussions that are attuned to the issues and debates within the region, while affirming the importance of learning and sharing ideas on a cross-country, global, and historical scale. An integral part of the journal's mandate is to foster scholarship that is not just empirically grounded and multidisciplinary, but capable of bridging the continuing divide in area studies between the social sciences and humanities, on the one hand, and the natural sciences, on the other. To this end, the journal includes accessibly written articles that build on insights and cutting-edge research from the natural sciences. We accept articles all year round.

Inquiries: english-editorial@cseas.kyoto-u.ac.jp

VISUAL DOCUMENTARY PROJECT

Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University
CSEAS Life and Green Visual Documentary Project
Organized under the CSEAS "Toward Sustainable Humanosphere"
Program and JSPS Asian Core Program.

"Care" in Southeast Asia: Every Day and into the Future

The Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University is accepting proposals from independent, young and upcoming filmmakers from Southeast Asia to make and submit documentaries which deal with the topic of "care."

Care is fundamental to human co-existence and mutuality. At the heart of this view of care is a relational perspective on human existence. Yet care is a western term that has no exact corresponding term in Asian languages. We hope that this project will stimulate Southeast Asian filmmakers into considering the relevance and meaning of care in their own societies.

Over the last 30 years, demographic changes in the region have led to a reorganization of social relations. How individuals, families and communities cope with the issue of care has become an increasingly important issue. Different forms of care exist in different cultural and social settings and the young, elderly and disabled all receive care and exert a moral claim to it.

The practice of care produces relations between the cared and carers in various social contexts. It is a lived practice concerned with the physical and psychosocial needs of particular persons. Relationships are formed by recognizing that bodies and their care at different stages in the human lifecycle form a fundamental foundation for the construction of societies. In Southeast Asia, these relationships are highly diverse and different care practices vary from country to country. In part this arises from unstable policy and institutional support.

We are accepting proposals from independent, young and upcoming filmmakers from Southeast Asia on documentaries which deal with the topic of care. The deadline for submission is 25 January 2013.

http://sea-sh.cseas.kyoto-u.ac.jp/visual_documentary_project/
For more information please contact Mario Lopez **marioivanlopez@cseas.kyoto-u.ac.jp**
and Jafar Suryomenggolo **jafar@cseas.kyoto-u.ac.jp**

Photo Credit: Dave Lumenta

Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University, 46 Shimoadachi-cho, Yoshida, Sakyo-ku, Kyoto 606-8501, Japan
Tel: +81-75-753-7302 Fax: +81-75-753-7350
京都大学東南アジア研究所 〒606-8501 京都市左京区吉田下阿達町46 Tel: 075-753-7302 Fax: 075-753-7350

Editors: Mario Lopez, Ishikawa Noboru 〈編 集〉マリオ・ロペズ 石川 登

Date of Issue: 30.09.2012

ISSN 2185-663X